



**FOREIGN
BROADCAST
INFORMATION
SERVICE**

JPRS Report

Soviet Union

Military History Journal

No 3, March 1988

Soviet Union MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

No 3, March 1988

JPRS-UMJ-88-009

CONTENTS

28 JUNE 1988

Soviet books and journal articles displaying a copyright notice are reproduced and sold by NTIS with permission of the copyright agency of the Soviet Union. Permission for further reproduction must be obtained from copyright owner.

[The following is a translation of the Russian-language monthly journal VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL published in Moscow. Refer to the table of contents for a listing of any articles not translated.]

CPSU Leadership—Basis of Might of Soviet Armed Forces [A.I. Makunin; pp 3-10]	1
From History of Soviet-Czechoslovak Military Cooperation [V.F. Yermakov; pp 11-16]	6
Organization of Strategic Leadership of Soviet Armed Forces [V.D. Danilov; pp 17-25]	10
Development of Theory of Offensive Combat in Depth in Prewar Years [V.I. Ulyanov; pp 26-33]	17
Breaching Enemy Defenses [A.P. Maryshev; pp 34-40]	22
Offensive of Second Belorussian Front in Polesye [S.N. Mikhalev; pp 41-48]	27
Cooperation of Ground Troops with Attack Air Formations [V.A. Kumskov; pp 49-54]	33
Partisan Raids [A.S. Knyazkov; pp 55-62]	37
Regiment Offensive Under Winter Conditions [I.I. Kartavtsev; pp 68-70]	42
2d Assault Army in Combat for the Motherland [N.G. Lyashchenko; pp 71-77]	44
Combat Operations of LXXIX Rifle Corps [M.M. Bondar; pp 78-83]	49
Articles Not Translated from VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL No 3, March 1988	54
Publication Data	54

MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

CPSU Leadership—Basis of Might of Soviet Armed Forces

00010034a Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press 24 Feb 88) pp 3-10

[Article, published under the heading "Toward the 19th All-Union Party Conference," by Lt Gen A.I. Makunin: "CPSU Leadership—The Basis of the Might of the Soviet Armed Forces"]

[Text] In the report at the joint ceremony of the CPSU Central Committee, the USSR Supreme Soviet and the RSFSR Supreme Soviet devoted to the 70th anniversary of Great October, M.S. Gorbachev particularly emphasized: "As long as the danger of war remains, as long as social revenge remains the core of the West's strategy and militaristic programs, we in the future will do everything required to maintain defense might on a level excluding the military superiority of imperialism over socialism."(1)

Concern for peace and the defense of the victories of the October Revolution has been one of the most important traits in the policy of the Leninist party. The questions of defending the socialist fatherland and Soviet power have always held and continue to hold an important place in the theoretical and practical activities of the CPSU. They have been thoroughly and completely disclosed in Lenin's teachings about the defense of the revolution. At each stage in the nation's historical development, our party has enriched the theory of the defense of the socialist fatherland with new conclusions and ideas.

Historical experience has persuasively shown the vitality and permanent importance of party leadership over all the processes of Soviet military organizational development. Even at the dawn of the development of the Soviet state and its Armed Forces, the Party Central Committee in the Decree "On the Policy of the Military Department" of 25 December 1918 emphasized that "the policy of the military department, like all the other departments and institutions, is carried out on the precise basis of the general directives given by the party in the person of its Central Committee and under its immediate control."(2)

This concept was further strengthened and developed in the documents and decisions of our party. The CPSU Program emphasizes that the fundamental basis of strengthening the defense of the socialist motherland is leadership by the Communist Party over military organizational development and the Armed Forces.(3)

The entire history of the founding, development and constant improvement of the Soviet Army is inseparably linked to the revolutionary accomplishments of our people to the activities of the Communist Party and to all the stages in the life of the socialist state.

The Great October socialist revolution—the major event of the 20th Century—became the first step by mankind along the path to a society of social justice, without oppression and without wars. For this reason the fact that Lenin's Peace Decree was the first legal act of the Soviet state was not merely a fortuitous coincidence but a profoundly natural phenomenon. For restructuring social life on new principles the worker and peasant state needed peace above all. As V.I. Lenin foresaw, international imperialism did not tolerate the fact that the Red Banner of liberated labor flew over one-sixth of the world and endeavored to stifle the first socialist country in the cradle. The imperialist reaction became the organizer of the armed struggle against the young Soviet republic.

Armed with Marxist-Leninist theory and the experience of preceding revolutions, the party pointed out to the working class and to all the people the solely dependable path under these conditions, the path of developing a new type of army, an army of workers. In raising the masses to fight against the interventionists and the domestic counterrevolution and in calling for the establishment of powerful Armed Forces of the socialist state, V.I. Lenin said: "We are defenders after the 25th of October 1917 and we have won the right to defend the fatherland. We are defending not secret treaties, we have abrogated them, we have disclosed them to the entire world and we are defending the fatherland against the imperialists.... Precisely because we are the supporters of defending the fatherland, we say to ourselves: for defense it is essential to have a firm and strong army, a strong rear...."(4) The party and V.I. Lenin directed their efforts at an economic upsurge in the nation, the greatest possible strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the establishing of a strong Worker-Peasant Red Army [RKKA]. The greatest accomplishment of V.I. Lenin and the Bolshevik Party to history was that they established the Soviet state's army capable of defending the victories of October.

Under the immediate leadership of the party, plans were worked out and implemented to defeat the troops of the interventionists and the domestic counterrevolution. Military questions were discussed systematically at the party congresses and conferences as well as the Central Committee Plenums. Just between the 8th and 10th Party Congresses, that is, during the peak of the Civil War (March 1919—March 1921), the fundamental questions of the Soviet state's policy and ensuring victory over the enemies were resolved at 35 Central Committee Plenums, 95 sessions of the Central Committee Politburo, 19 joint sessions of the Central Committee Politburo and Orgburo [Organization Bureau] and some 219 sessions of the Orgburo of the RKP(b) [Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee.

During the years of the Civil War, the great Lenin was at the helm of leadership over the combat activities of the Red Army. He was linked by vital threads with all the fronts and his office was turned, in essence, into a staff

where the most complicated tasks of national defense were carried out. Under the direct leadership of Vladimir Ilich, the Central Committee resolved all the main questions of arming and supplying the army, the placement of the leading military personnel and the elaboration of the major military operations. He wrote and signed hundreds of telegrams and letters on the questions of organizing the defeat of the White Guards and interventionists. V.I. Lenin was constantly concerned with the political indoctrination of the Red Armymen and took part in this.

During the spring and summer of 1918, V.I. Lenin met regularly with the leading workers of the Moscow Military District. He was interested in the course of making up the units, the state of the troops and political work, the moods of the Red Armymen, their training and the training of command personnel. He was sharply critical of the lack of organization, indiscipline and inefficiency of certain chiefs and the poor training of individual units, subunits and their commanders; he provided advice on how to better eliminate the shortcomings more quickly.

During the years of the Civil War, the organizing and inspiring role of the communist party, as a wise leader bringing our nation's workers to victory, became apparent with particular strength. "And only due to the fact that the party was on guard," emphasized V.I. Lenin, "that the party was most strictly disciplined and because the party united all the departments and institutions and under the slogan given by the Central Committee did scores, hundreds, thousands and ultimately millions march as a single man, and only because the unprecedented sacrifices were made—only for this reason could the miracle which came about happen." (5)

Having won the first battle against imperialism, the Soviet people began peacetime construction. Repeatedly the imperialists endeavored to test the strength and might of our state and its army (on the Chinese East Railroad and in the Soviet-Finnish War), but each time received their due.

The danger of aggression was particularly heightened in the 1930s with the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany. The party not for a moment weakened its vigilance and attention to the nation's defense capability and to military organizational development. In fighting to preserve peace, the Soviet state completely readied the Army and Navy to repel aggression. A number of major political, economic and military measures was carried out. The successes of the first five-year plans and the scientific and technical achievements made it possible for us to begin rearming the Army and Navy. The Soviet people at times gave up the most essential things but spared nothing for their Armed Forces. New units and formations were constituted and the reserves began to be accumulated. But history gave us too little time to implement the designated plans.

V.I. Lenin taught that in the period of the harshest combat against the reactionary forces when the destiny of the nation and the people is being determined, a fighting party is the ideal of the proletariat's party. During the years of the Great Patriotic War, the Communist Party became truly a fighting party. It headed, ideologically armed and inspired a fighting people, it clearly defined the goals of the war imposed on it and worked out a program for mobilizing all the forces to repel the Nazi aggressor.

On 23 June 1941, the VKP(b) [All-Union Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee and the USSR SNK [Council of People's Commissars] adopted a decree which set out the tasks for the party and soviet bodies under wartime conditions. According to it, each party organization was obliged to restructure its work and see to it that all the communists were organized and disciplined in carrying out the political, military and economic tasks. The directive approved on 29 June by the VKP(b) Central Committee and the USSR SNK and which became the basic program documents of the party and the Soviet people set out a military-political plan for defeating the enemy.

The party Central Committee together with the local party and soviet organizations and the military commissariats initiated military mobilizational work of unprecedented scale. By the end of 1941, some 286 rifle divisions, 159 rifle brigades and 76 tank brigades had been constituted.

The Army and Navy received a significant amount of leading party cadres and around one-half of these was members and candidate members of the VKP(b) Central Committee and 270 leading workers from the personnel of the VKP(b) Central Committee. Some 500 secretaries from the central committees of the Union republic communist parties, the kray, oblast, city and rayon party communists and 1,265 workers of the oblast and rayon level left for the front. As a total during the years of the Great Patriotic War, some 13,850 party workers were mobilized into the Armed Forces.

By the war's end, the Army and Navy had over 3 million communists. By their personal example they raised combat morale of the masses, led them into feats and instilled in the men firm confidence in complete victory over the enemy. One out of four frontline soldiers was a communist. Some 3 million sons and daughters of the party died a death of the brave on the battlefields. But its ranks were not thinned: some 5 million Soviet patriots over the years of the war joined the party ranks. The leadership of the Communist Party was the most important source of victory won by the Soviet people and their Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War.

Under present-day conditions, the role of the party, as the leading and directing force in ensuring the nation's defense capability and in the further development and

improvement of the military organization of the socialist state of all the people, has immeasurably grown. This has been determined primarily by foreign political factors.

The CPSU policy, including in the area of strengthening national defense, in a concentrated and consistent manner has been set out in the party programs, in the decisions of the party congresses, the plenums of the CPSU Central Committee and in the decrees. The realization of this policy is of enormous significance both for our nation and for all mankind. The role of the Soviet Union has risen as a powerful factor in the struggle against the imperialist policy of suppression, aggression and war. The peace-loving foreign policy worked out by the party and consistently carried out by the Soviet state combined with the growing defense capability of the nation has ensured the Soviet people and many other peoples of the world a peaceful life for more than four decades. At present, the defense of our nation meets the requirements of the new situation and has been organized considering the fundamental changes in military affairs.

The establishing of a military strategic parity between the USSR and the United States, the Warsaw Pact and NATO has been a historical achievement for socialism. This has strengthened the positions of the USSR, the other socialist countries and all progressive forces and has refuted the plans of the aggressive imperialist circles for victory in a world nuclear war. The maintaining of this equilibrium is a major guarantee for ensuring peace and international security, as is emphasized in the CPSU Program.

The growing role of the CPSU in directing the armed defense of the victories of socialism was brought about by a whole number of factors: by the complicated situation on the international scene; by the plans worked out by the imperialist states for achieving military strategic superiority; by the qualitative changes in the structure and nature of the Armed Services and combat arms, by the delivery of new types of weapons and military equipment and by changes in the combat methods; by the increased indoctrinational role of the Soviet Army; by the necessity of strengthening military patriotic indoctrination of the Soviet people and the developing of their readiness to defend the socialist fatherland, to give it all their strength, and, if need be, their life; by the strengthening of the ideological struggle, since the Armed Forces, like any part of our society, are an object of ideological subversion by imperialism, as well as by other factors.

The party has thoroughly considered the effect of all these factors in its practical activities, and has skillfully and effectively employed the advantages and possibilities of socialism for strengthening the nation's defense capability. In accord with the changes in the military political situation in the world and considering the

growing economic, scientific-technical and other potentials of Soviet defense might, the party has determined the content and main directions in the development of Soviet defensive military doctrine.

At present, everyone can see that the Soviet people and the peoples of the other socialist commonwealth countries are in the front ranks for peace and for the survival of mankind. Clear confirmation of this was the regular meeting of the Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact states held in May 1987 in the GDR capital. Having thoroughly examined the situation in Europe and in the world as a whole, the conference participants stated that the development of world events, the changes in international relations, the growing interdependence of states, scientific and technical progress and the development of weapons of unprecedented destructive force require new thinking and a different approach to the questions of war and peace and disarmament as well as to other complex global and regional problems.

At the meeting in Berlin, the Warsaw Pact member nations stated that their military doctrine is of a defensive nature and proceeds from the necessity of maintaining the equilibrium of military forces on the lowest possible level, the advisability of reducing military potentials to the limits of sufficiency required for defense. The main feature of the military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact, like the military doctrine of each of its members, is that it is subordinate to carrying out the cardinal task confronting mankind, that is, the task of preventing a war, both nuclear and conventional. The Warsaw Pact member states have stated with all responsibility that they will never, under any circumstances, commence military operations against any state or union of states whatsoever, if they themselves are not the object of armed attack, they will never be the first to employ nuclear weapons, they do not have territorial claims against any state either in Europe or outside of Europe, and do not consider any state or any people as their enemy. The defensive nature of the Warsaw Pact's military doctrine is its most important feature.

Equilibrium and parity have been and remain the main factor in military strategic stability. The allied socialist states do not claim any greater security than any other countries but they will likewise accept no less. In being in favor of disarmament, the Warsaw Pact member states have been forced to maintain their armed forces of such strength and on such a level which would make it possible for them to repulse an outside attack on any Pact member state. The allied states keep their armed forces in a combat readiness sufficient to prevent being caught by surprise and in the event of attack to deal a crushing rebuff to the aggressor.

In vain are the dreams of those who plan by the force of arms to resolve the historic dispute between socialism and capitalism. The response to the provocations of the enemies of peace and progress is the high defensive

might of the Warsaw Pact, as well as the increased vigilance and combat readiness of their armed forces. The defensive military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact in being designed exclusively to repel a military threat in no way means that the actions of the defenders of socialism will be of a passive nature. "In the event of aggression," pointed out the USSR Minister of Defense, Army Gen D.T. Yazov, "our Armed Forces together with the fraternal socialist armies will defend the socialist victories with all determination. The security of our nation and the socialist commonwealth as a whole is a sacred concern for us.(6)

In being guided by the CPSU Program and By-Laws and in working on the basis of the provisions and instructions approved by the Central Committee, the Army and Navy political bodies and party organizations are ensuring the carrying out of party policy in the Armed Forces. The Army and Navy communists unite the men around the Communist Party, they indoctrinate them in a spirit of the ideas of Marxism-Leninism and total dedication to the socialist motherland, they actively assist in strengthening the unity of the Army and people, and are concerned with increasing the combat readiness of troops and naval forces and strengthening military discipline.

By the entire way of its life and activity the party provides an example of creativity, democracy, collectivism and comradeship. The very implementing of the party's leadership role is inseparable, if it can be so put, from the "intensifying" of internal party life and the strengthening of the ranks of like-thinkers. The impulse to intensifying the human factor comes from the party itself, its bodies, organizations and the communists. For this reason it is completely natural that the by-law obligations of the party members have taken on a new content while the demands upon the communists and their responsibility for carrying out party policy have risen.

The leading position of the party in society obliges each communist to set an example in labor and be an unique standard of moral purity. Presently, the communists are looked to as an example worthy of emulation. "There is no vanguard role of a communist generally," points out the Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress, "this is expressed in practical deeds."(7)

Acceleration and restructuring are universal principles which encompass all aspects of the life and activity of the party, state, society and army. These completely concern the Moscow Military District, too. Here there are both our achievements and difficulties, our unsolved problems and shortcomings. The commanders, the political workers and the party organizations are steadily mastering the new forms and methods of activity and are eliminating everything that impedes our work and life and they are taking an innovative approach to searching out the ways for increasing the combat readiness of the

district troops, for strengthening military discipline and uniting the multinational military collectives. In truth, as yet not everyone understands the essence of restructuring and not everyone wishes to actually adjust. Some in words are in favor of the restructuring but work in the old manner, without initiative and creativity. The results of the last training year confirm this very eloquently. Where the restructuring, as they say, is picking up speed, there has been real progress. This applies fully, for instance, to the collective of the guards tank regiment and initiator of the socialist competition in the Ground Troops and in the district in honor of the 70th anniversary of Great October and which has won the title of outstanding. Promising successes have also been achieved by certain collectives of the Guards Kantemirovka Tank Division, a number of subunits of tank troops, artillery, signalmen, scouts, helicopter pilots, chemical troops and men from other combat arms. There have also been real successes in the work of the Ryazan VVAIU [Higher Military Aviation Engineer School] and the Tula VAIU [Military Aviation Engineer School], the Voronezh, Belgorod and Bryansk Oblast Military Commissariats and the military chairs of certain VUZes.

At the same time it must be directly admitted that there have not been tangible changes everywhere, in certain places the tasks have been carried out with poor quality indicators and the approach to the question has not conformed to the growing demands. This concerns, in particular, certain subunits in the Guards Taman Motorized Rifle Division, a motorized rifle unit which for many years has led in the competition and a number of other military collectives. The Smolensk VZRIU [Military Antiaircraft Missile Engineer School], the Kolomna VAKU [Military Artillery Command School], the Gorkiy VVUT [a higher military school], the Tambov VVAUL [Higher Military Pilot School] as well as the Ryazan and Kostroma Oblast Military Commissariats.

At present, the tasks stemming from the decisions of the June (1987) Plenum of the CPSU Central Committee for the political bodies and the party organizations and the demands of the Central Committee to increase the combat readiness of the Armed Forces cannot be carried out by the old methods. Nevertheless, certain units and subunits as before do not pay proper attention to such important questions as the strengthening of military discipline, ensuring strict internal order, the cohesiveness of the troop collectives and the establishing of prescribed relations in them. Weaknesses and oversimplification in military and political training have not been eliminated everywhere. The questions of the cultural and routine services for the personnel and servicemen families are not being settled quickly enough. Difficulties have arisen because of the poor physical and psychological preparation of a portion of the youth for military service. Certain young soldiers have a poor knowledge of Russian and this from the outset impedes the process of training, indoctrination and the standing

of duty. We are aware of all of this and are overcoming it, but in light of the present demands of the CPSU Central Committee, we must work faster, more decisively and firmly.

Yes, we are vitally interested at present in a high rate of improving our activities. Only here we must rely upon a knowledge of the laws of social development. Professionalism in work depends upon a constant and uncompromising exactingness on the part of each leader for himself.

We would particularly like to point to the need for increased exactingness for oneself on the part of the communists on the staffs and other headquarters bodies. That role which they are called upon to play in the life of the district troops is too crucial. Certainly each leader communist should carry out his duty irreproachably and be a model of discipline. And they would like to see the same in the subordinate units and subunits, that is, wise, strict and humble teachers who do not forget their conscience and are loyal to party truth. Clear vision, exactingness, consistency in carrying out what has been planned and the contributing of new elements, procedures and methods to the question of military professional training give the activities of the headquarters bodies a particular qualitative hue.

The most important qualities of a leader communist are: competence, the ability to correctly understand the situation. In order to take the correct decision which will ensure the success in combat, it is essential to have a profound knowledge of the state of affairs in the subordinate collectives and be aware of the mood of the men. A leader should be close to others and head the fight for strong discipline and combat readiness. However, there still are many leaders, including the chiefs of political bodies, who do not have enough time to do individual work with the men as if this were something to be done in free hours. Hence, they have a poor knowledge of the situation in one or another collective, they often taken decisions at random and cannot inspire the men to seek out effective ways to carry out the set task.

Indisputably, many of our cadres lack professionalism in utilizing political methods of leadership. One cannot help but be concerned by the fact that a good portion of the secretaries of the party committees and bureaus is burdened down with purely administrative concerns, it is not involved with their specific matters and has largely lost the skills of a political approach to carrying out the pending tasks. This is particularly noticeable in the work of strengthening military discipline. In resolving this problem, some of our commanders, political workers and party organizations hold positions of retarding a growth of infractions. The "gross" approach to the question and formalism, when numerous plans and measures obscure the living man do not make it possible to spot the reasons for the negative phenomena and decisively eradicate them.

The restructuring of the psychology of thought is a difficult process. The accelerating of this is aided by attention to man, principledness and justice, sincerity and cordiality in human relations. How much moral support and an encouraging word mean. Talk about the human factor is empty if there is no true humanity.

When we say that it is essential to learn to live and work under conditions of widening democracy, we have in mind not merely the "acquainting" with glasnost but primarily a change in psychology and in the thinking of each person. It is a question of the ability to employ democratic institutions in the interests of increasing combat readiness, strengthening military discipline, as well as a more respectful, attentive and at the same time exacting and principled attitude toward others. In other words, we need democracy so that legality is strengthened in the troop collectives and justice triumphs in order to maintain a moral atmosphere in which each serviceman can completely carry out his military duty.

The party teaches that constant concern for the personnel has nothing in common with complacency and all-forgiveness. We do not have the right to forget this lesson. Those who wish to work in the new manner must be given greater trust and more respect shown for their opinions and proposals. At the same time, we must not reduce party exactingness or lessen supervision over the fulfillment by the communists of their prescribed duties. Success in the restructuring depends directly and is closely linked with a higher role for the political bodies and the primary party organizations in the indoctrinating of the personnel.

We are endeavoring that each political body and each party organization is profoundly aware of the fact that the current period of restructuring is a period of practical undertakings. It is time to cease merely talking about restructuring and we must show results in combat skills, in discipline, in better everyday life for the men, in a unifying of the collectives, in greater class ratings and interchangeability, that is, in all that determines combat readiness. It is essential that each communist constantly remembers that a deed and only a deed is the criterion of personal restructuring and a measure of personal contribution to the preparations for the 19th All-Union Party Conference.

The general line of Soviet foreign policy remains unchanged. This is a struggle for peace and for preventing war. The Soviet-American treaty to eliminate medium and shorter range missiles is an important achievement on the way to eliminating the nuclear threat.

However, the situation in the world due to the fault of the militant imperialist circles, remains tense. The imperialists want at whatever the cost to violate the military strategic parity and achieve military superiority over the

Soviet Union. The CPSU Central Committee and the Soviet government are doing everything necessary to ensure the USSR, our friends and allies. Socialism and peace are indivisible.

All the party's activities in the area of military organizational development and the strengthening of national defense and security are an embodiment and creative development of the immortal Leninist ideas of the defense of socialism. Party policy and its leadership over the Armed Forces which recently celebrated their 70th anniversary, have been, are and will be in the future the vital basis of Soviet military organizational development and the guarantee for the invincible defensive might of the socialist state.

Footnotes

1. M.S. Gorbachev, "Oktyabr i perestroika: revolyutsiya prodolzhaetsya" [October and Restructuring: The Revolution Continues], Moscow, Politizdat, 1987, p 55.

2. "KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh Sovetskogo Soyuz: Dokumenty 1917-1981" [The CPSU on the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union: Documents 1917-1981], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1981, p 42.

3. See: "Materialy XXVII syezda KPSS" [Materials of the 27th CPSU Congress], Moscow, Politizdat, 1986, p 161.

4. V.I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 36, pp 341-342.

5. Ibid., Vol 40, p 240.

6. "Military Doctrine of the Warsaw Pact—A Doctrine of Peace and Socialism," *Pravda*, 27 July 1987.

7. "Materialy XXVII syezda...", p 78.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal", 1988.
10272

From History of Soviet-Czechoslovak Military Cooperation

00010034b Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press 24 Feb 88) pp 11-16

[Article by Col Gen V.F. Yermakov: "From the History of Soviet-Czechoslovak Military Cooperation"]

[Text] Soviet-Czechoslovak cooperation has deep historical roots. "The ties of sincere friendship have linked us for many centuries," said the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee M.S. Gorbachev during his visit to the CSSR in April 1987. "This is not encountered so often in Europe where history has woven complex international and interstate nexus."(1)

The joint centuries-old struggle against foreign invaders contributed greatly to the rise of mutual sympathies and fraternal feelings between our peoples. Even in the 9th-10th Centuries there were extensive Russian-Czech trade and cultural ties. In 966, the chronicler Nestor pointed out that the relations between the Czech state and Kievan Russia were dominated by peace and affection. In the Battle of Grunwald (1410), Russian, Ukrainian, Belorussian and Czech militias fought bravely along with the Polish and Lithuanian troops against the knights of the Teutonic Order. In 1447, Czech troops helped the Prince of Novgorod in the fight against German crusaders. At the beginning of the 16th Century, Czech soldiers were hired for service for the Moscow Grand Duke. Fraternity grew even stronger after the meeting of Czechs and Slovaks with Russian troops which under the command of A.V. Suvorov and M.I. Kutuzov crossed over their lands. This was during the Napoleonic Wars. The classic Czech writer Alois Jirasek in this context wrote: "They were accepted in Prague as allies, as the heroes of victorious engagements...these mighty warriors in addition to boldness and bravery possess noble feelings and a good heart. The captivating kinship of language tied the knot of friendship even tighter."(2)

A new stage in the development of friendship between the peoples of our country and Czechoslovakia, military cooperation, began with the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution. Many Czech and Slovak internationalists participated in the October Armed Insurrection and fought against the White Guards and interventionists on the fronts of the Civil War. In 1918, in a number of our cities Czechoslovak international detachments of the Red Army were constituted. The Czechoslovak detachment established in Vladivostok numbering 700-800 men participated in the fighting in the Far East. In the Ukraine, fighting against the troops of Kaiser Germany were a Czechoslovak infantry subunit numbering 280 fighters and a railroad detachment of 190 men. Czechoslovak internationalists participated in the fighting on the Volga, in the Urals and Siberia and in other places. Many of them held prominent command and political posts in the army. Thus, Slavojar Cestek was one of the leaders in organizing the international units of the Red Army and a commander of the 1st International Brigade, and showed outstanding military talent and valor in the fighting on the Eastern Front. The well known Czech writer Jaroslav Gasek held leading posts in the 5th Siberian Army.(3) The Slovak Red Armyman Josef Sikora fought in the legendary 25th Chapayev Division, Frantisek Kaplan was a fighter in the Kama Flotilla, while Desider Frior fought for Soviet power in Irkutsk. For boldness and valor many Czechoslovak internationalists received high decorations of the Soviet republic. Among them were Jaroslav Gasek, Cenek Grushka, Frantisek Richtarz, Gustav Mach and others.

In defending the socialist system in Russia, the Czechoslovak nationalists fought for the cause of socialism throughout the world and for the national independence

of their country which had become possible due to the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution as this led to an upsurge in the national liberation movement in Europe and to the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which for long years had suppressed the peoples of Czechoslovakia.

The Soviet-Czechoslovak military cooperation which was born in the flaming years of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the Civil War underwent further development in the course of the joint struggles of our peoples against fascism, the first major clashes against this occurring on Spanish land in 1936-1939. During the fighting, Soviet internationalist soldiers helped the Czechoslovak patriots master the weapons and tactical procedures and provided mutual help in combat.

The joint struggle against fascism continued successfully during the years of World War II. Soviet-Czechoslovak military cooperation grew stronger, was tempered and gained a new content in the mortal clashes against the Nazi invaders. Czechoslovak troop units were established on the territory of our country with selfless Soviet aid. The small Urals town of Buzuluk became, in the expression of Army Gen L. Svoboda, the cradle of the new, people's Army of Czechoslovakia. Here, in 1942, the constituting of the 1st Separate Czechoslovak Infantry Battalion, was completed.

Soviet veteran officers provided great help in training the personnel and in shaping up the first Czechoslovak troop unit. They generously shared their theoretical knowledge and combat experience and helped the Czechoslovak soldiers prepare for the forthcoming fighting. The Soviet Command allocated the required equipment, weapons and clothing for the training of the battalion's personnel and for equipping it. The brothers in arms received 553 semiautomatic rifles, 192 carbines, 10 sniper rifles, 46 submachine guns, 40 light machine guns and 12 medium machine guns, 16 antitank rifles, 2 45-mm guns and 18 mortars. In terms of the number of personnel and weapons the newly constituted Czechoslovak Infantry Battalion was approximately equal to two-thirds of a prewar Czechoslovak regiment, but, in terms of the quality of the weaponry and fire, it was stronger than it.

The Czechoslovak soldiers first engaged the Nazis some 45 years ago, on 8 March 1943 near Kharkov in an area of the village of Sokolovo. They destroyed 19 enemy tanks, 5 armored personnel carriers and around 400 Nazis. For the military feats at Sokolovo, 87 of them were awarded orders and medals of the USSR, while the commander of the 1st Infantry Company, Sr Lt ["nadporuchik"] O. Jaros was the first foreigner to receive the title of Hero of the Soviet Union (posthumously).(5)

After its combat baptism at Sokolovo the Czechoslovak military unit blazed a glorious combat trail together with the Soviet Army. Kiev, Belaya Tserkov and Rovno were

the historic markers along this trail. From a separate battalion it grew into the 1st Separate Czechoslovak Brigade and from a brigade into a corps. In the autumn of 1944, Soviet troops together with men from the 1 Czechoslovak Army Corps were fighting stubbornly for the Dukla Pass in the Carpathians. Having forced the Nazis from the pass, on 6 October they entered Czechoslovak territory. By a government decision this day has been proclaimed the Czechoslovak People's Army Day.

The Slovak National Uprising which broke out on 29 August 1944 upon the appeal of the Slovak Communist Party was a significant event in the history of Soviet-Czechoslovak military cooperation. The fact that more than 70,000 soldiers fought in the ranks of the rebels and that they liberated and then for a period of 2 months held two-thirds of Slovak territory places the Slovak National Uprising among the most significant anti-Nazi actions in Europe. The Soviet Union provided the rebels with complete aid both material, military, political and moral. Even during the first days of the uprising, the Soviet government sent Slovakia a good amount of weapons and supplies and ferried the 2d Czechoslovak Paratrooper Brigade and the Czechoslovak Fighter Air Regiment.(6) Fighting in the area of the uprising were the Soviet paratroopers and partisan groups and detachments of S.A. Kovpak, A.S. Yegorov, Ye.P. Volyanskiy, V.A. Karasev, A.I. Shukayev and others totaling around 3,000 men.

During the years of World War II, the Prague Operation of the Soviet Army and the May insurrection of the Czech people were a vivid page concluding the chronicle of combat friendship between the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples. Having made an unprecedented march from Berlin via Dresden and the Ore Mountains, the 3d and 4th Guards Tank Armies under the leadership of Gens P.S. Rybalko and D.D. Lelyushenko entered the rebelling Czechoslovak capital and by 1200 hours on 9 May had liberated it. The day of 9 May has become a national holiday of the Czech and Slovak peoples. It has been proclaimed Czechoslovakia Liberation Day.

The Soviet Armed Forces played a crucial role in defeating the Nazi occupiers on Czechoslovak territory. Almost 1.9 million soldiers participated in the operations of its liberation. Around 13,000 Soviet partisans fought on Czechoslovak land. The fierce fighting occurring here cost the Soviet Army heavy casualties. Some 144,000 Soviet soldiers were killed and over 364,000 were wounded.(7)

The friendship between the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples, in being united together in the blood shed in the battles against Nazism became a dependable support for the further strengthening of their combat alliance during the postwar years. In 1945-1955, the combat cooperation between the USSR and Czechoslovakia was based upon the Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Aid and Postwar Collaboration concluded on 12 December 1943.(8) In accord with this, the Soviet Union was to provide

extensive aid to Czechoslovakia in the rearming and technical reequipping of its army (in 1963, this treaty was extended and in 1970 a new one was signed). For example, just according to an agreement of 14 April 1945, the USSR turned over weapons and supplies for 10 divisions for the needs of the New Czechoslovak army and for national defense. From 1950 through 1956, Soviet military advisers worked in the CSSR and did a great deal for organizing the training and indoctrination of the men of the CPA [Czechoslovak People's Army], for their mastery of the new equipment and for the training of command personnel.

With the signing of the Warsaw Pact on 14 May 1955, a new stage commenced in the history of Soviet-Czechoslovak military cooperation. The Soviet Union provided and continues to provide Czechoslovakia with the essential aid by direct delivery of new types of weapons, licenses and the essential technical specifications for their production. There has been an extensive reciprocal exchange of experience in the interests of the rapid mastery of the new equipment and weapons by the personnel as well as an exchange of military technical literature, regulations, field manuals and training aids. By joint efforts the rational and most effective forms and thought out for operational and combat training and for ideological and political indoctrination with the personnel. Depending upon the international situation, during this period there was the coordinating of plans to strengthen the defense capability of our states, the forms and methods of cooperation were improved and its content depended upon the requirements(3) of collective defense and the development of military affairs.

The military cooperation between the men of our fraternal armies continues to develop and improve under present-day conditions. Annual meetings and the holding of leadership conferences have become a firm practice. Here they sum up the results of combat and operational training for the troops and staff, they outline new training tasks and measures and they exchange opinions and experience on a broad range of questions relating to military organizational development, the training and indoctrination of the troops. This makes it possible to work out uniform views concerning the training, organization and conduct of combat, troop command and their support.

In recent years, a system has risen of conducting various assemblies, demonstration and procedural exercises. Characteristic of such exercises is the extensive integrating of operational, tactical and weapons training as well as the employment of complex combat equipment, new methods and procedures of troop training. During these the troops are acquainted with the methods of employing modern training equipment, they work out the most complicated tasks including combat training considering the rational outfitting of the ranges, firing ranges, training fields, classrooms and so forth. In the course of the demonstration tactical and command-staff exercises, the leadership of the formations and units develops a unified

understanding of the training methods, the most effective methods for preparing and conducting combat and implementing a full range of measures for all types of support.

At present there are widespread reciprocal consultations by specialists on the most complex questions of mastering the new types of weaponry and combat equipment as well as on their employment and operation and reciprocal scientific and technical exchanges of information. Exhibits have been organized for samples of military equipment, there have been conferences and consultations, and there has also been the exchange of specialists who help the personnel to quickly master the new equipment.

Mutual aid in the training of officer personnel is an effective factor in further strengthening friendly ties between the fraternal countries. Close contacts have been established between our military academies and schools. There is a reciprocal exchange of delegations of faculties and help is provided in organizing the training process and in improving the training facilities. The joint training of the Soviet Army and CPA officers in the academies helps not only to strengthen friendship between them but also to develop a uniform understanding of the questions of tactics and operational art and the employment of combat equipment and troop control facilities.

The armies of both countries represent a complex and technically equipped organism the control of which is within the reach only of persons who possess high combat and moral-political qualities. The fraternal parties of our countries proceed from Lenin's instructions that however much an army is equipped with modern weapons and combat equipment, man remains the main and decisive force in a war. For this reason the entire system of operational, combat and political training is aimed at instilling high combat moral qualities in the personnel.

The joint troop, command-staff and special exercises and maneuvers hold a special place in strengthening the military cooperation of the allied armies. These clearly demonstrate the increased combat capabilities of the troops, they mobilize the men to defend the revolutionary victories of socialism and they help to indoctrinate the men in a spirit of military friendship, proletarian solidarity and socialist internationalism, to improve cooperation and troop control and to enrich the operational art and tactics of the allied army troops. At the exercises conducted in recent years such as Soyuz [Union], Shchit [Shield] and Druzhba [Friendship], they have worked through the questions of the field skills of the staffs and troops, command and cooperation. In the course of them troop control in a highly fluid situation was improved, experience was exchanged, the most

effective procedures of combat were worked out and there was the moral and psychological conditioning of the soldiers. This contributed to the successful execution of the set tasks.

The friendship and military cooperation of the Soviet and Czechoslovak soldiers are strengthened and developed in the course of daily combat training and in meetings to exchange experience between the subunits, soldiers and NCOs of similar specialties, where the participants share their experience in servicing and operating the military equipment and weapons and describe the successes achieved in military and political training and the arising problems. Particularly close ties have been established between the Soviet and Czechoslovak personnel in the exchange of subunits, when the CPA subunits for a short period of time undergo training in the units of the Central Group of Forces and vice versa. The combat training exercises are conducted, as a rule, together with or in parallel with the subunits of the fraternal armies. The joint exercises, the contests on the equipment to carry out combat standards and other measures contribute to the high quality mastery of military professional knowledge and provide an opportunity to better organize the socialist competition between the Soviet and Czechoslovak personnel as well as more fruitfully exchange experience.

The joint measures are conducted in the garrisons employing all the available field training facilities, combat equipment, classrooms, various athletic facilities, the service and cultural institutions. This makes it possible for the personnel first-hand to become acquainted with the combat equipment and weapons of the other allied army and to exchange experience in combat employment and operation. Joint competitions of an athletic and applied military nature are organized and conducted widely.

Important form of military cooperation is the combined employment of the CPA ranges and training facilities by the Soviet Army units and subunits, particularly during the tactical exercises, field firing and other measures. The Soviet Army formations and units here have a complete opportunity to employ all the facilities and installations on the ranges and this makes it possible to train our troops in fighting on unfamiliar terrain and under various conditions close to actual combat.

During the period of conducting all joint measures related to combat training, particular attention is given to organizing and carrying out political indoctrination. Its basic content is focused on widening and deepening the knowledge of the men concerning the life of the fraternal peoples in the allied states, about their successes in building communism and socialism as well as about the role and importance of the Warsaw Pact and its defensive military doctrine. On the basis of this

knowledge the personnel develops high qualities of patriotic and internationalist soldiers and there are a further strengthening and development of friendly ties between them.

The political bodies play an important role in strengthening the international contacts between the Soviet and Czechoslovak military and in developing collaboration between our fraternal armies.

A strong ideological charge is injected by a range of regularly conducted measures linked to the joint celebrating of significant dates in the life of the Soviet and Czechoslovak peoples and their armed forces. These widely involve Czechoslovak citizens, activists from the Czechoslovak-Soviet Friendship Union, the CPA personnel as well as the party and state leaders of the CSSR.

Very beneficial are the meetings conducted on all levels in the aim of exchanging experience in party political work, particularly on the questions of party organizational and ideological work as well as mass cultural and youth activities. Along with a detailed discussion of the acquired experience, the political workers during the meetings become acquainted with the life and routine of the personnel in the units and formations and pick up new methods and forms for indoctrinating and training the men.

A major contribution to the strengthening of Soviet-Czechoslovak fraternity in arms is made by the 10 days of military cooperation conducted annually from 1 through 10 May in the honor of the victory of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War and the liberation of Czechoslovakia by the Soviet Army. During this time, they organize joint excursions by Czechoslovak and Soviet soldiers to the sites of battles, friendship trains are dispatched to the Dukla Pass and there are meetings of outstanding men in military and political training.

The military cooperation between the socialist commonwealth countries and the military fraternity of their armies do not run counter to the peace-loving foreign policy. The military political goals of our countries have been set out in the document of the Berlin Conference of the Political Consultative Committee "On the Military Doctrine of the Warsaw Pact Member States." The military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact, like that of each of its members, is subordinate to the task of preventing war, both nuclear and conventional. Our common military doctrine represents a system of fundamental views on the prevention of war, on military organizational development and the preparation of our nations and their armed forces to repel aggression and the methods of conducting armed combat in defense of socialism. The most characteristic feature in the military doctrine of the Warsaw Pact is that it is strictly defensive. The allied socialist states have declared to the entire world that they will never, under no circumstances, commence military actions against any other state of alliance of states, if they are not the object of armed aggression, and they they will

never be the first to employ nuclear weapons. They have no territorial claims on any country and do not consider any state or any people as their enemy.

At the same time, the men of the fraternal countries are well aware that the defensive nature of socialist military doctrine places high demands on the combat readiness of their armed forces. In constantly strengthening the combat cooperation of the fraternal armies, they vigilantly stand on guard for the peace and security of peoples. Our allied countries in every possible way are developing military and military-technical collaboration on the basis of mutual respect for independence and sovereignty, nonintervention into one another's internal affairs, equality in resolving the fundamental questions of defending the Warsaw Pact states as well as collective responsibility for the defense of socialist victories.

Footnotes

1. *Pravda*, 10 April 1987.
2. A. Jirasek, "Sochineniya" [Works], translated from the Czech, Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 5, 1975, p 454.
3. "Na vechnyye vremena. Na Vechne Chasy" [For Times Eternal], Moscow—Prague, Voenizdat, 2d Revised and Supplemented Edition, pp 25-26.
4. *Ibid.*, p 88.
5. "Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna 1941-1945: Entsiklopediya" [The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945: Encyclopedia], Moscow, Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1985, p 671.
6. G. Husak, "Svidetelstvo o Slovatskom natsionalnom vosstanii" [Evidence on the Slovak National Uprising], translated from the Slovak, Moscow, *Pravda*, 1969, p 390.
7. "Na vechnyye vremena...." pp 270-271.
8. "Sovetsko-chekhoslovatskiye otnosheniya vo vremya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny 1941-1945 gg. Dokumenty i materialy" [Soviet-Czechoslovak Relations During the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945. Documents and Materials], Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1960, pp 132-135.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal", 1988.

10272

Organization of Strategic Leadership of Soviet Armed Forces

00010034c Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press 24 Feb 88) pp 17-25

[Article, published under the heading "Soviet Military Art," by Col V.D. Danilov, candidate of historical sciences: "The Organization of Strategic Leadership of the Soviet Armed Forces (1917-1920)"]

[Text] With the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution and the formation of the Soviet government in October 1917,(1) the functions of **military political leadership** in our country were carried out by the following bodies. Over-all leadership over national defense and the Armed Forces was the prerogative of the Communist Party Central Committee. "At each Central Committee session dealing with any major question of strategy," emphasized V.I. Lenin, "there was not a single time where there was not a session of the Central Committee or Central Committee Bureau, there was not a single time when we did not resolve the main questions of strategy." (2) The Central Committee decisions on military questions were carried out by the All-Russian Central Executive Committee [VTsIK] as well as the Council of People's Commissars [SNK] which was the supreme leadership body of the Armed Forces. (3)

The extraordinary body organized on 30 November 1918 and headed by V.I. Lenin, the Worker and Peasant Defense Council (SRKO) and in April 1920 was changed into the Labor and Defense Council (STO) carried out the measures planned by the Communist Party to turn the nation into a military camp and mobilize all of the forces for this. From December 1918 through 27 February 1920, the SRKO held 101 sessions at which they discussed around 2,300 questions of organizing national defense. All sessions, with the exception of two, were chaired by V.I. Lenin. (4)

The system of strategic leadership bodies came into being as the armed struggle developed against the counterrevolution and interventionists. The previous military administration was unsuitable for leading the Soviet Armed Forces. For this reason on 26 October 1917 the Committee for Military and Naval Affairs was organized as part of the Soviet government. This included the prominent party workers V.A. Antonov-Ovseyenko, N.V. Krylenko and P.Ye. Dybenko. However, on the very next day in the aim of strengthening leadership over the Army and Navy, this body was filled out with representatives from the following bodies established on the eve of the revolution: the Military Organization Under the RSDRP(b) [Russian Social Democratic Workers Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee (Voyenka) and the Military Revolutionary Committee Under the Petrograd Soviet (V.N. Vasilevskiy, K.S. Yeremeyev, P. Ye. Lazimir, K.A. Mekhonoshin, N.I. Podvoyskiy and E.M. Sklyanskiy). The committee was

later transformed into the Council of People's Commissars on Military and Naval Affairs. The Council immediately began work to overcome the sabotage of the military specialists from the previous military and naval departments, the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief(5) and the front commands and to restructure their activities in the interests of Soviet power.

Due to the fact that the previous Headquarters had been turned into a bastion of counterrevolution, energetic measures had to be taken to recover it. During the night of 7 November 1917, the SNK sent to the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, Gen Dukhonin, a radio telegram which demanded that a proposal be sent to the military authorities of the enemy armies for the immediate halting of military operations in the aim of opening peace talks.(6) After Dukhonin's refusal to carry out these commands, he was removed from his position. The warrant officer ("praporshchik") N.V. Krylenko was appointed the new commander-in-chief by the SNK and V.I. Lenin had called him one "of the most ardent Bolshevik representatives closest to the Army."(7)

The central military organization was established and improved. After the College for the Management of the Military Department headed by N.I. Podvoyskiy was separated from the Council of People's Commissars for Military and Naval Affairs on 23 November 1917, and on 30 January 1918, the same was done for the College for the Management of the Naval Department headed by P.Ye. Dybenko, this body was named the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs (Narkomvoyen). The basic directions in military leadership were more clearly defined: operational involving the control of the operational army via the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and administrative in the form of the control of the Army and Navy in the form of the corresponding military and naval colleges. On 15 January 1918, when the SNK adopted the decree on establishing the Worker-Peasant Red Army (RKKA), the All-Russian College for the Organization and Constituting of the RKKA was formed under the Narkomvoyen.(8)

The offensive which commenced in February 1918 by the Austro-German troops immediately raised the urgent task of establishing an effective headquarters body for the operational troops. For this reason at the beginning of March, the Superior Military Council was formed as the superior body of military authority in the nation.(9) The position of supreme commander-in-chief was abolished and Headquarters was eliminated.

However, the small sized Superior Military Council headed by the military leader and former general M.D. Bonch-Bruyevich and two political commissars, the member of the Central Committee of the Leftist SR Party, P.P. Proshyan and the Bolshevik K.I. Shutko was unable to direct the operational army and the activities of the people's commissars for military and naval affairs.

Because of this on 19 March the SNK increased the size of the council and clarified its structure and functions. This body was put "at the head of the question of national defense." It was made responsible for working out the plans of state defense, organizing the Army and Navy, unifying their activities, providing supervision, registering the old military specialists and so forth.(10) Added additionally to the council were N.I. Podvoyskiy, K.A. Mekhonoshin, E.M. Sklyanskiy, V.A. Antonov-Ovseyenko and from the naval department, V.M. Alt-fater and Ye.A. Berens.(11) The People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs L.D. Trotskiy was appointed chairman of the Superior Military Council.

The Superior Military Council carried out definite work in organizing the leadership of military organizational development and primarily in organizing troops to cover the Western frontiers of the nation. However, the newly organized council was unable to bring the organizational development of the Armed Forces into the proper system.(12) Many questions of control, manning and the training of military personnel, indoctrination and training of the personnel, the strategic deployment of troops and the organization of their supply remained unsolved. For example, only by the SNK Decree of 19 August 1918 was the leadership of the departmental armed forces brought together within the Narkomvoyen (these included the people's commissariats of the railroads, trade and industry, food, the Superior Council of the National Economy and others).(13) The decentralization which existed prior to this complicated the leadership over the constituting of the units, their arming, training and combat employment. One cannot help but consider the circumstance that Gen Bonch-Bruyevich did not possess the required data for performing the duties of the military leader of the Superior Military Council.(14)

Under these conditions, due to the growing military threat, the party Central Committee considered it advisable to organize a new centralized leadership body for the Armed Forces as well as establish the position of commander-in-chief with all the front commanders subordinate to him. By the decree of the VTsIK of 2 September 1918, the Revolutionary Military Council of the Republic (RVSR) was organized with a membership of V.A. Antonov-Ovseyenko, I.I. Vatselis, K.Kh. Danishevskiy, P.A. Kobozev, K.A. Mekhonoshin, V.I. Nevskiy, N.I. Podvoyskiy, I.N. Smirnov, E.M. Sklyanskiy (deputy chairman) and L.D. Trotskiy (chairman). The RVSR assumed the rights of the colleges of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs and the People's Commissariat for Naval Affairs. Under it were Vseroglavshab (All-Russian High Staff), the Central Supply Directorate, the Superior Legislative Council, the Superior Military Inspectorate and other bodies. The Superior Military Council and its staff as well as the operations section of Narkomvoyen were disbanded.(15)

Simultaneously with the organizing of the RVSR the position of Commander-in-Chief of All the Republic Armed Forces was established for leadership over the

operational army.(16) Subordinate to him in operational terms were the commanders of the fronts and separate armies, the fleets and flotillas, while the Republic Western Army was directly subordinate to him. For unifying military control in Siberia, by the Order of the RVSR No. 597/102 of 20 April 1920, the position of assistant commander-in-chief for Siberia was established and all the field troops and fortified areas located in Siberia were put subordinate to him.

The commander-in-chief was granted extensive powers. Within the limits of the directives received from the military-political leadership through the chairman of the RVSR, he was granted complete independence in settling all questions of a strategic-operational nature as well as the right to appoint, transfer and fire command personnel of the troops, the military directorates and institutions comprising the operational army.(17) The day-to-day orders and command appointments were authorized by the signature of the commander-in-chief and one of the RVSR members empowered to do this.

With the formation of the RVSR and the instituting of the position of commander-in-chief over all the armed forces of the republic, the process of establishing the centralized leadership bodies of the Armed Forces of the young Soviet state was basically completed.(18)

In the process of organizing the system of strategic leadership bodies, great attention was given to developing the headquarters bodies for the service of the General Staff. The Main Directorate of the General Staff of the old army (GUGSh) was unable to carry out the task of controlling the Armed Forces of the Soviet state. For this reason, after the overthrow of the Provisional Government, the previous leadership of the GUGSh was replaced, but the body itself was kept and involved in the building up of the new army and the organization of national defense. The generals and officers who refused to collaborate with Soviet power were dismissed and Gen V.V. Marushevskiy who was the acting chief of the General Staff was arrested for counterrevolutionary activities. In November 1917, Gen N.M. Potapov who was loyal to proletarian power was appointed the chief of the General Staff.

The Revolutionary Field Staff which was organized under the Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief on 27 November 1917 (disbanded on 12 March 1918) also played a definite role in the establishing and developing of the Soviet service of the General Staff. It worked to democratize and demobilize the army, as well as organize revolutionary detachments for suppressing counterrevolution and anti-Soviet revolts.

On 6 March 1918, under the military leader of the Superior Military Council a staff was established which on 20 June became the Field Staff. It included: directorates (operations, organizational and railroads), artillery inspectors, engineers, military administrative and other bodies.(19)

The Field Staff of the Superior Military Council submitted to the government proposals on the organizational development of the new army, the military administrative divisioning of the nation's territories and the organizing of a recruitment and manning system. It worked out the structure and defined the functions of the central bodies and high command and exercised immediate leadership over the constituting of the Red Army detachments and their military operations. However, its activities did not meet the ever-increasing demands for providing dependable leadership over the armed struggle. For this reason with the forming of the RVSR, as its main body to provide operational and strategic leadership over the operational army, on the basis of the Field Staff of the Superior Military Council, the RVSR Field Staff was established (from 6 September to 2 October 1918 the RVSR Staff). It was directly subordinate to the commander-in-chief and carried out the tasks of elaborating strategic plans, directives and operational assignments for the fronts, transmitting the orders of the commander-in-chief to the troops, supporting troop command, leadership over military movements, the collecting and processing of information about the enemy and so forth.(20)

In October 1920, under the chief of the RVSR Field Staff were the following: the directorates (operations, administrative, military railroads and signals of the Red Army); the Central Commission for the Labor Employment of the Red Army and Navy; a naval specialist; the Field Directorate for Aviation and Air Navigation; inspectors of the infantry, cavalry, armored units, artillery, engineers, military administration and military sanitary; a unit for the fortified areas. The Registration Directorate was directly subordinate to one of the members of the RVSR, while the code section was under the military commissar of the Field Staff.(21) The RVSR Field Staff successfully provided leadership over the elaboration, preparation and execution of operations against the interventionists and White Guards. On 10 February 1921, it was merged with the All-Russian High Staff into the single RKKA Staff.

At the same time the system of administrative command bodies of the Armed Forces was developed. By the order of the Narkomvoen of 12 January 1918, the old military administrative system on the spot was abolished. Its functions were turned over to the military sections of the soviets and in the army to the army (front), corps, divisional and regimental committees under which the appropriate staffs were established.(22)

In March 1918, the new dividing of the military districts was approved and their leading bodies—military district councils—were formed. Each of these included a military leader and two political commissars. The first TOE of a division were introduced, and in April instead of the varying military sections of the soviets they formed a uniform local military system with the volost, uyezd, provincial and district military commissariats. Their tasks included not only the registration and induction of

citizens for military service but also the organizing of the troops, the training of workers in military affairs, command of the troops assigned to provide local needs and so forth.(23) In emphasizing the major role of the military commissariats in the organizational development of the Armed Forces, V.I. Lenin said in June 1920 that "without the military commissariat we would not have a Red Army."(24)

In the aims of accelerating the organization of the Red Army and supervising the constituting and training of the troops, in April 1920, the Superior Military Inspectorate was established under the chairmanship of N.I. Podvoyskiy.

The further exacerbation of the situation, when virtually the entire territory of the nation became the theater of military operations, required a clearer organization of control over the organizational development and training of the army. For this purpose, by the Order of the Narkomvoen No. 339 of 8 May 1918, the All-Russian High Staff (Vseroglavshstab) was established. Along with the All-Russian College for the Organization and Formation of the Red Army, the High Staff, the Main Commissariat of Military Schools and the Directorate for the Repair of the Army, this body also included the former Main Directorate of the General Staff.(25) By the end of September 1920, Vseroglavshstab included the following: directorates (organizational, with international and Eastern sections, mobilizational, for command personnel, the military topographers corps), the Main Directorate of Military Schools, the Main Directorate of Vseovobuch [Universal Military Training] and the Constituting of Red Reserve Units, the Directorate of Central Military Warehouses for Teaching Aids and Equipment for the Troops and Military Commissariats, the Military History Commission, the Committee for Designing Uniforms and Supplies of the Red Army, the Main Military-Scientific Editorial Staff and the editorial staff of the journal *Voyennoye delo* [Military Affairs].

Thus, Vseroglavshstab became a body which resolved the questions of manning, organizing, mobilizing and filling out the army, it was concerned with the training of command personnel and assumed certain functions of the service of the General Staff. On 10 February 1920, it was united with the RVSR Field Staff into the single RKKA Staff.

A matter of particular concern for the Communist Party was the establishing and strengthening of the political bodies. Initially, party political work in the Army was carried out by party organizations and later also the organization-agitation subsections (sections) of the military departments of the councils and staffs. Their work was directed by the Organizational Agitation Section of the All-Russian College for the Organizing and Constituting of the Red Army established on 24 January 1918. At the same time, the All-Russian Bureau of Front and

Rear Organizations Under the Party Central Committee and the Agitation College of the VTsIK functioned as superior political bodies in the army.

The institution of political commissars was established in the Red Army and on 8 April the All-Russian Bureau of Military Commissars headed by I.Yu. Yurenev was established under the commissars of the Superior Military Council. In accord with the decisions of the 8th Party Congress in April 1919, the All-Russian Bureau of Military Commissars was abolished and a unified Political Section of the RVSR was created and this on 26 May was transformed into the Political Directorate of the RVSR (PUR).(26) It was headed by the member of the RKP(b) [Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)] Central Committee I.T. Smolka who was simultaneously a member of the RVSR. The PUR was entrusted with leadership over all military educational work in the Red Army and Navy. By the end of 1920, the PUR consisted of two sections: administrative-housekeeping and organization-inspector and with the latter having five subsections: inspector, instructor, organizational, informational and accounting-distribution.(27) The political directorates of the districts and fronts were the PUR bodies on the spot.

A particular feature in the development of the headquarters bodies of the Armed Services, the combat arms, special troops and services was that they, while basically maintaining their previous structure and functions, substantially altered their personnel, the forms and methods of their work.

The Armed Forces of the Soviet state by the end of the Civil War included the RKKA, the Navy and the interior service troops.

The Red Army, in uniting the nation's Ground Forces, was divided into operational troops (infantry, cavalry and artillery), technical troops (Red Air Force, armored forces, railroad troops, engineer troops and signal troops) as well as the special-purpose troops (penal, convoy, special-purpose, reserve and training).(28) Control over them was exercised by the RVSR through the RVSR Field Staff, the All-Russian High Staff, the system of main and central directorates as well as the field headquarters of the fronts, armies and the directorates of the military districts.

Thus, at the head of the Red Air Force was the Directorate of the Red Air Force which on 24 May 1918 was renamed the Main Directorate of the Worker-Peasant Red Air Force. Under it were all the aviation and navigation units, directorates and institutions and in special terms the Staff of the Operational Air Force (it was subordinate to the RVSR Field Staff) and the Directorate for Air Force Supply (it was subordinate to the Central Supply Directorate).(29)

Control over the artillery, armored forces, railroad and engineer troops, the signal troops was carried out in operational terms through the appropriate inspectors of

the RVSR Field Staff, the field headquarters of the field forces and formations while in organizational and technical terms through the corresponding main and central directorates.

Leadership over the Navy was carried out along the general lines of Soviet military organizational development. On 14 November 1917, control over the personnel of the former Naval Ministry shifted into the hands of the Supreme Naval College with a staff set up in the place of the former Cruise Staff of the Naval Ministry. Simultaneously, the former supreme body for naval affairs and the naval department—the Admiralty Council—was abolished.

A College of the People's Commissariat for Naval Affairs was placed at the head of the Worker-Peasant Red Navy formed on 29 January 1918. The college included: P.Ye. Dybenko (people's commissar),(30) I.I. Vakhrameyev, F.F. Raskolnikov, S.Ye. Saks and V.M. Altfater (from April 1918).(31) On 22 February the former Naval Ministry became the People's Commissariat for Naval Affairs. Later, when the RVSR had been created, the College of the People's Commissariat for Naval Affairs was abolished and a Naval Section was included in the RVSR.(32)

By the end of 1920, the command of all the seagoing, lake and river forces was exercised by the Commander of the Naval Forces of the Republic (Komorsi) subordinate to the RVSR through the Commander-in-Chief of All Armed Forces of the Republic and the military commissar. The former Rear Adm V.M. Altfater became the first Komorsi and V.V. Raskolnikov the first commissar. The Staff of all the naval forces of the republic (Stamorsi) was the working staff of Komorsi with the rights of the Field Staff consisting of: operational headquarters, the group of staff flagship specialists, the clerk's office and a signals service. B.S. Radziyevskiy was the chief of Stamorsi until January 1921.

The questions of technical and administrative support were the responsibility of the corresponding assistant Komorsi and under them were the chief naval directorates including technical, administrative and finance as well as the hydrographic directorate.

The rear bodies were formed gradually. One of the first supply bodies was the supply and weapons sections organized under the All-Russian College for the Organization and Manning of the Red Army. In March 1918, under the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs the Administrative Committee was formed and here was concentrated the leadership over supplying the troops with food, clothing, supplies, hospital supplies and transport as well as billeting and military communications. Supervision over the activities of the administrative bodies was provided by the Military Administrative Council which was organized at the same time. In line with the initiating of military operations and the organizing of the armies and fronts in the summer of 1918,

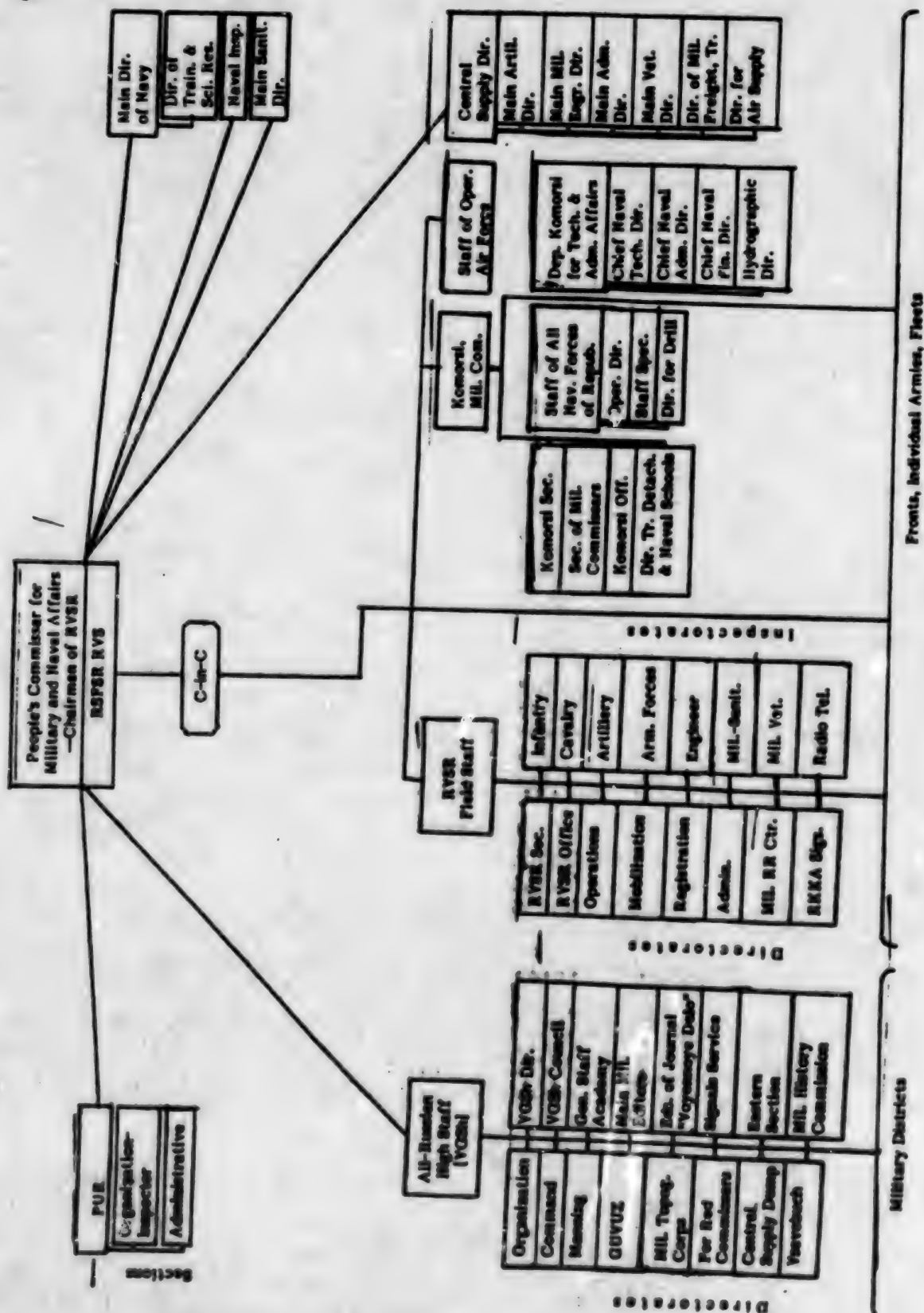
the Central Supply Directorate of the Red Army (TsUS) was organized as part of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs. All the supply directorates, both the new ones and from the old defense ministry, were transferred to it. The Military Administrative Council was renamed the Military Legislative Council.(33)

At the end of the Civil War, all troop supply articles were distributed between the main supply directorates of which the Main Military Administrative Directorate, the Main Military Engineer Directorate, the Main Artillery Directorate, the Main Signals Directorate, the Main Armored Forces Directorate and the Main Air Force Directorate were subordinate to the Main Supply Chief in terms of supply questions.(34)

Supply of the Armed Forces (with the exception of food) as well as the organizing of the production of defense products and the distribution of supplies in the front and in the rear were brought together under the Directorate of the Extraordinary Representative of the STO for Supply of the Red Army and Navy (ChUSOSNABARM). Supply of food and fodder was the duty of the Main Directorate for the Food Supply of the Red Army under the People's Commissariat of Food (GLAVSNAB-PRODARM). Supply of clothing and transport, office supplies, and other administrative articles was entrusted to the Main Military Administrative Directorate. The Main Directorate of Universal Military Instruction, the Financial Section of the RVSR, the Main Sanitary Directorate and the Main Military Veterinary Section were also in charge of the corresponding services.

Simultaneously with the central bodies, a system of operational-strategic level bodies was developed in the form of the front, army, divisional and other bodies of the troop field headquarters. The start to organizing the first superior operational field force of the Soviet troops was made with the establishing of the Eastern Front and the instituting on 13 July 1918 of its Revolutionary Military Council (RVS) for directing all the detachments and operations against the Czechoslovak rebels and the domestic counterrevolution. The front's RVS included a commander and two military commissars. A staff was organized as its main working body consisting of the following directorates: operations, administrative, military railroads and chief of supply. The front's RVS also had a political section.(35)

By the order of the RVSR of 11 September 1918, the Northern, Eastern and Southern Fronts and the Western Defensive Area were constituted and in November, the Caspian-Caucasus Front. By the end of the Civil War, the field headquarters of the fronts included: the RVS (commander and two military commissars), a staff, a political section and directorates of the inspectors of combat arms (infantry, cavalry, artillery and so forth), the chiefs of supply and sanitation affairs as well as a revolutionary military tribunal and control group. The army field headquarters had an analogous structure but of a different scale.



System of Strategic Leadership Bodies
of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Civil War

These were the main measures relating to the organizational development of the system of strategic leadership bodies of the Soviet Armed Forces during the years of the Civil War (see the diagram).

The system of strategic leadership bodies organized under the leadership of the Communist Party headed by V.I. Lenin successfully handled its tasks during the years of the Civil War. "The establishing of a military and state apparatus which was capable of victoriously enduring the hardships of 1917-1921," said V.I. Lenin, "was a great undertaking." (36)

The experience of the organizational development of the system of strategic leadership bodies during the years of the Civil War was widely studied and employed in the interwar period as well as the Great Patriotic War. This experience has not lost its importance under present-day conditions. Still pertinent is the experience of achieving unity in political, state and military leadership under wartime conditions and ensuring the mobilization of all the nation's resources for repelling the counterrevolution and intervention; creating an integrated system of strategic leadership bodies encompassing all aspects of the organizational development, training and employment of the Armed Forces; combining collectivism and one-man command in leadership of armed combat and so forth. A study of this experience will help to broaden the viewpoint of the military personnel in the questions of the organizational development of the Armed Forces.

Footnotes

1. All dates prior to 14 February 1918 are given according to the old style.
2. "Leninskiy sbornik XXXVII" [The Leninist Collection XXXVII], Moscow, Politizdat, 1970, p 137.
3. "KPSS o Vooruzhennykh Silakh Sovetskogo Soyuz: Dokumenty i materialy 1917-1968" [The CPSU on the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union: Documents and Materials 1917-1968], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1969, p 20.
4. V.I. Lenin, PSS [Complete Collected Works], Vol 37, p 613.
5. During the years of World War I (1914-1918), Headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief was the superior body of the troop field headquarters and the headquarters of the supreme commander-in-chief. By October 1917, this included 16 directorates and 3 offices (up to 250 generals, officers and officials). As the body of the Provisional Government in Headquarters there was a General Army Committee of SRs and Mensheviks (*Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No 4, 1968, p 113).
6. "Dekrety Sovetskoy vlasti" [Decrees of Soviet Power], Moscow, Politizdat, Vol 1, 1957, p 53.
7. V.I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 35, p 377.
8. TsGASA [Central State Archives of the Soviet Army], folio 4, inv. 1, file 720, sheet 3.
9. *Izvestiya VTsIK*, 5 March 1918. Due to his disagreement with the establishing of a new superior military command body and the involvement of the former Tsarist generals in the leadership of the army, the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and Member of the College of the Narkomvoyen N.V. Krylenko submitted to the RSFSR SNK a request for release from the military positions held by him. The request was granted (Yu.I. Korablev, "V.I. Lenin i sozdaniye Krasnoy Armii" [V.I. Lenin and the Creation of the Red Army], Moscow, Nauka, 1970, pp 234-236).
10. TsPA IML [Central Party Archives of the Marxism-Leninism Institute], folio 19, inv. 1, file 78, sheet 10.
11. "50 let Vooruzhennykh Sil SSSR" [50 Years of the USSR Armed Forces], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1968, p 33.
12. TsGASA, folio 3, inv. 4, file 32, sheets 15, 20.
13. See: "Iz istorii grazhdanskoy voyny i interventsii: 1917-1922 gg." [From the History of the Civil War and Intervention: 1917-1922], Moscow, Nauka, 1974, pp 222-223.
14. M.D. Bonch-Bruyevich, "Vaya vlast Sovetam" [All Power to the Soviets], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1964, p 311.
15. TsGASA, folio 4, inv. 1, file 720, sheet 3.
16. The commanders-in-chief were Cols of the General Staff I.I. Vatsetis (from 6 September 1918) and S.S. Kamenev (from 8 July 1919 to 1 April 1924).
17. "Regulation Governing the Commander-in-Chief of All the Armed Forces of the Republic" (*Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No 4, 1960, p 90).
18. In accord with the Directive of the Party Central Committee of 4 May 1919, the leadership over the armed forces of the RSFSR as well as the Ukraine, Belorussia, Lithuania and Estonia was unified (TsPA IML, folio 17, inv. 2, file 17, sheet 10).
19. S.M. Klyatskin, "Na zashchite Oktyabra" [In the Defense of October], Moscow, Nauka, 1955, pp 175-176.
20. TsGASA, folio 6, inv. 4, file 1081, sheet 5. The first chief of the RVSR Field Staff was the general of the Old Army, N.I. Rattel.
21. TsGASA, folio 6, inv. 4, file 1081, sheet 8.
22. *Rabochaya i Krestyanskaya Krasnaya Armiya i Flot*, 28 January 1918.
23. TsGASA, Orders of the Narkomvoyen for 1918. Order of the Narkomvoyen No 295 of 20 March 1918.

24. V.I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 41, p 148.

25. "Sistematizirovannyi spravochnik-ukazatel za 1917-1918 gody" [Systematized Reference Index for 1917-1918], Moscow, 1919, p 25. The general of the Old Army, N.N. Stogov, was the first chief of the All-Russian High Staff (from mid-1918 he went over to the side of the Whites).

26. TsGASA, Collection of Orders of the RVSR for 1919, 1919 RVSR Order, No 912.

27. "Otchet Narodnogo komissariata po voyennym delam za 1921 gody" [Report of the People's Commissariat for Military Affairs for 1921], Moscow, 1922, pp 135-136.

28. Ibid.

29. *Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No 6, 1968, pp 9-10.

30. P.Ye. Dybenko was the people's commissar for naval affairs from 22 February through 18 March 1918. From April 1918 through 30 December 1922, this post was held by L.D. Trotskiy (see: "Grazhdanskaya vojna i voyennaya interentsiya v SSSR: Entsiklopediya" [The Civil War and Military Intervention in the USSR: An Encyclopedia], Moscow, Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1987, p 375).

31. B.I. Zverev, "V.I. Lenin i Flot (1918-1920)" [V.I. Lenin and the Navy (1918-1920)], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1978, p 83.

32. "Sistematicheskii sbornik postanovleniy, izdannykh po Narodnomu komissariatu po morskim delam s 25 oktyabrya 1917 goda po 31 dekabrya 1918 goda" [Systematic Collection of Decrees Issued for the People's Commissariat of Naval Affairs From 25 October 1917 Through 31 December 1918], Moscow, 1919, p 18.

33. TsGASA, Orders of the Narkomvoya for 1918. Orders of the Narkomvoya No 414 of 1 June 1918 and No 445 of 15 June 1918.

34. "Otchet Narodnogo komissariata...", p 92.

35. Yu.I. Koroblev, op. cit., pp 307-308, 310.

36. V.I. Lenin, PSS, Vol 44, p 106.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal", 1988.

10272

Development of Theory of Offensive Combat in Depth in Prewar Years

00010034d Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press 24 Feb 88) pp 26-33

[Article by Col V.I. Ulyanov: "Development of Theory of Offensive Combat in Depth During Prewar Years"]

[Text] After the Civil War and intervention, the Soviet republic gained the opportunity to commence peacetime construction. Under the leadership of the Communist Party, our people created a powerful industry, they collectivized agriculture and carried out a cultural revolution. The Communist Party developed a military policy and defined the direction and tasks of military organizational development. Soviet military science developed along with the better organization of the Red Army and Navy, their technical rearming, the training and indoctrination of command personnel. In adding up all the best from the military theoretical heritage of the past and the combat experience of defending the socialist nation, and in being enriched with new theoretical concepts, the military science outstripped the theories existing at that time in the armies of the capitalist states concerning many questions of the conduct of combat. In working this out, three aspects were taken into account. In the first place, the theory of group tactics which corresponded to the conditions of the 1920s did not meet the requirements of a future war. Consequently, the need arose of working out a fundamentally new theory of conducting combat and seeking out those means and methods of combat actions which would make it possible to successfully cross the strong fire curtain of the enemy's solid front and quickly deal a defeat to its assault groupings.

Secondly, the technical means of combat had grown qualitatively and quantitatively and mobile formations had been developed. Our prewar manuals viewed the infantry as the main combat arms, as it took the main burden of combat and was capable of ensuring the capture and protracted holding of the terrain. However, here the infantry was to be supported by other combat arms, including aviation. These views were the objective prerequisite for resolving the questions of offensive combat in a new way. The third aspect. Soviet military science, in supporting a defensive doctrine, proceeded from the idea of a retaliatory strike against the enemy. This idea derived from the very essence of the socialist system, from the policy of the Soviet state which was vitally interested in maintaining peace and did not intend to attack anyone.

A major achievement of Soviet military science was the theory of an operation in depth, in accord with which the theory of offensive combat in depth was worked out. Considering the development of the technical means of combat, the questions of increasing the maneuverability and strike force of the troops and their combat capabilities lay at its basis.

Theory of offensive combat in depth proceeded from the view that combat had become combined-arms and that its goal could be achieved on the basis of the cooperation of all the combat arms by decisive offensive actions which should end with the encirclement and destruction of the enemy. It also considered the circumstance that the rifle units and formations had received a large amount of light machine guns, company, battalion and regimental mortars as well as antitank, antiaircraft and field artillery pieces. For example, the total number of machine guns in rifle formations from 1930 through 1939 increased by 5.5-fold. Here there was a tendency for greater fire capabilities of a rifle division (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparative Table for Fire Capabilities of Rifle Division

According to Divisional TOE of	Number of Small Arms and Machine Gun Rounds per Minute	Weight of One Mortar Salvo, kg	Weight of One Artillery Salvo, kg	Total Weight of One Artillery-Mortar Salvo, kg
1923	89,8230	—	336.0	336.0
1924	96,430	—	522.0	522.0
1929	128,910	—	578.4	578.4
1931	141,550	—	584.6	584.6
1935	160,910	55.8	1026.8	1082.6
1939	200,950	375.3	1326.0	1701.3
1940	353,120	433.8	1388.4	1822.2

The basic provisions of the theory of combat in depth were formulated in "Instruksiya po glubokomu boyu" [Instructions on Combat in Depth] published in 1935 and in the RKKA [Worker Peasant Red Army] Provisional Field Manual (PU-36). The essence of the theory of offensive combat in depth consisted in the simultaneous hitting of the enemy's battle formation "to the entire depth of its position" (Article 9). This was achieved by air strikes and artillery fire, by having the long-range tank group quickly break through to the positions of the enemy artillery and tactical reserves, by the decisive forward advance of the infantry support tanks, by the non-stop advance of the infantry with the close support tanks as well as by active operations of airborne forces.

The elaboration of the theory of offensive combat in depth has its own history.

The idea was raised for the first time in 1928 by M.N. Tukhachevskiy. He points out that the new material and technical base of the army (long-range artillery, tanks, aviation and airborne forces) made it possible to abandon the previous attritional forms of combat for each enemy position separately and to switch to new, more effective forms and methods of fighting.(1) It is also correct to point out that other Soviet military scientists

were also concerned with elaborating the theory of offensive combat in depth. An important role in working out the new tactical principles was played by the works of M.V. Frunze, A.I. Verkhovskiy, N.Ye. Kapurin, Ye.K. Smyslovskiy and many others.

The theory of combat in depth was constantly tested out. Its individual provisions were clarified on the basis of the experience of exercises and maneuvers conducted in the military districts as well as in the fighting in the area of Lake Khasan, on the Khalkhin Gol River, on the Karelian Isthmus and during the commenced World War II. Thus, the idea of the possibility of simultaneously hitting the enemy to the entire tactical depth, in having three tank groups (close support, distant support and long-range) in cooperation with the long-range artillery and aviation was concretized by V.K. Triandafillov. L.B. Kalinovskiy worked out the tactics for these groups.

The theory of an operation in depth envisaged the carrying out of the first task, that is, the shattering of the enemy defenses, and which would be carried out by the rifle formations reinforced by tanks and artillery comprising the first operational army echelon. The exploitation of the tactical success into an operational one was to be completed by the rapid actions of mobile and airborne troops and by air strikes. These principles were also set down in the theory of offensive combat in depth.

At that time, the rifle corps was the superior tactical formation and depending upon the situation, it could operate in one of the combat echelons of the army operational configuration on the main or auxiliary axis or be in the front's reserve. In fighting in the first combat echelon, a rifle corps consisting of three rifle divisions, two artillery regiments, a separated antiaircraft battalion, a combat engineer battalion and a signals battalion, was to carry out the main tasks the entire tactical zone of the enemy defenses and creating conditions for exploiting the success.

As for the rifle division, from September 1939 through April 1941, its wartime TOE was changed three times. The division manned according to the new TOE was capable of making 96,500 small arms and machine gun rounds more than the division of the 1939 TOE. This shows that its weapons to the greatest degree had begun to match the tasks which its might encounter in offensive combat. The division became the main tactical formation. In the prewar years, the rifle divisions existed in a size of 12,000 and 6,000 men. The difference between them, in truth, was not essential and concerned the weapons, including the various caliber guns. The mountain rifle division which existed at that time in terms of personnel and weapons was significantly inferior to rifle divisions (Table 2). However, according to the wartime TOE both divisions were to be brought to a uniform strength. According to the 1941 TOE, a division consisted of three rifle regiments and two artillery regiments, an antitank battalion and an antiaircraft artillery battalion, a combat engineer battalion, a signals battalion as well as support and service subunits.(2)

Table 2. Comparative Characteristics of Rifle Divisions According to Peacetime and Wartime TOE

Type of rif. div.	Pers.	Vehicles	Horses	rifs. & carb.	Weapons med. mach. guns	lt. mach. guns	submach.	sm. cal.	Guns med. cal.	lg. cal.	mort.
12,000-man	10,291	414	1,955	7,818	164	371	1,159	62	70	12	150
6,000-man	5,864	155	905	3,685	163	324	691	52	62	12	108
Mt. rif.	8,829	203	3,160	6,960	110	314	788	8	56	—	120
War TOE	14,483	558	3,039	10,420	166	392	1,204	54	66	12	150

The offensive by a corps and division was envisaged as carried out against an enemy in the following instances: an enemy which had previously prepared a positional defense under field conditions or in fortified areas; an enemy which had hurriedly gone over to the defensive; which had employed a maneuvering defense. This was to commence both under conditions of immediate contact with the enemy as well as in the absence of such. Depending upon this, the methods of carrying out the battle tasks and the configuration of the battle formations were determined, with specific demands being placed on these formations. In particular, the battle formations should provide: the dealing of a decisive defeat to the enemy on the selected axis of the main thrust; the better employment of all means of combat and cooperation of the combat arms for achieving the set goals; flexibility and controllability providing the possibility of, when necessary, of changing the configuration of the formation as well as the possibility of repelling enemy counterattacks.

Proceeding from these requirements, the 1936 RKKA Provisional Field Manual recommended that on the offensive the battle formations be organized from the assault and holding groups and a reserve.

The assault group was designed to advance on the axis of the main thrust. It included two-thirds of the forces the basis of which were the TOE and attached weapons. The main criterion for the saturating of the group with infantry was the possibility of the final destruction of the enemy to the entire depth of its positions in cooperation with tanks, artillery and aviation. Here they avoided oversaturation by infantry, as this would involve completely unjustified losses. The width of the front of the assault group was determined depending upon the available forces, the nature of the terrain, the degree of engineer organization of the enemy defenses, their stability, as well as the enemy fire plan and forces. Thus, a divisional assault group consisting of at least two rifle regiments reinforced by tanks and supported by the basic mass of divisional and attached artillery could advance in a zone of 3-3.5 km.(3)

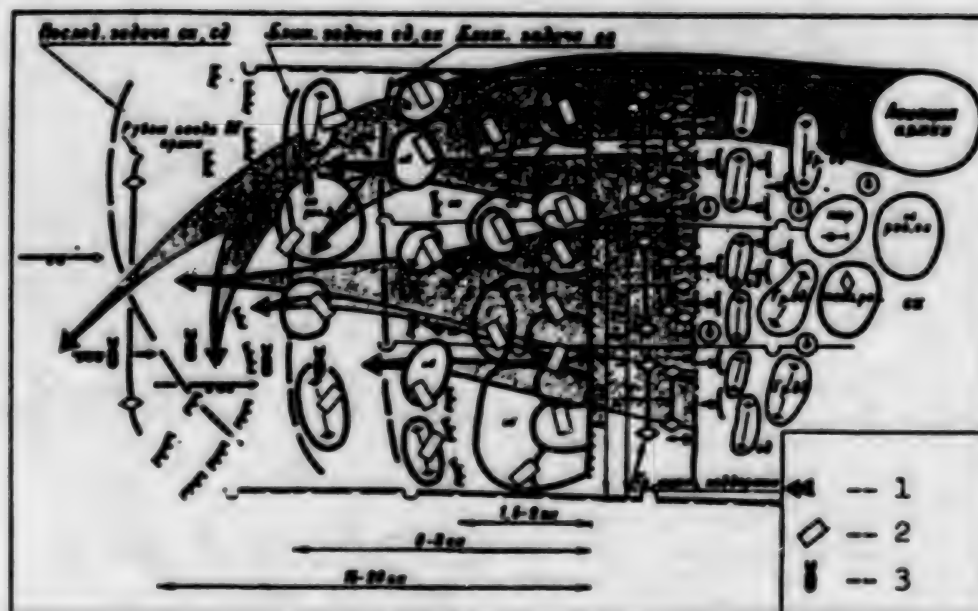
The holding group was designed for fighting on the secondary axis. It included limited forces. It

was given the task of tying down the enemy by active operations and preventing the enemy forces from regrouping to fight against the assault group.

However, the experience of the Soviet-Finnish War showed that the establishing of holding groups doomed these troops to passive operations. For this reason, on the eve of the Great Patriotic War, it was considered more effective to divide the battle formations into assault and holding groups. According to the draft of the 1941 Field Manual, the battle formation of the rifle formations and units on the offensive was split into combat echelons, artillery group, tank infantry support (TPP) groups and reserves (general, tank and antitank).(4)

The recommendations of the prewar years on the configuration of the battle formation did not fully reflect the essence of offensive combat in depth. In particular, a deeply echeloned configuration was planned for the formations, units and even the subunits. As a result of such echeloning, a significant portion of the divisional forces did not participate in combat. Subsequently, these views were revised and the second echelons began to receive active tasks and provide support for the first echelon by the firing of all available weapons.

The battle formation of a rifle regiment included two echelons (battalion behind battalion in the assault group) or three (battalion behind battalion), while the divisional assault group included two echelons (regiment behind regiment) or a single echelon (regiments side by side). The battle formation of a rifle corps on the offensive was usually organized in a single echelon (divisions side by side). This configuration was explained by the significant depth of the divisional battle formations and by convenience of command. The strength and the depth of a corps strike could be increased by the operational reserves. In all instances, the first echelons of the attacking troops were to be supported by all the weapons of the subsequent echelons and primarily by the artillery. The main purpose of the second echelons was not to replace the first as in the past but rather to boost the strength of the assault in the aim of exploiting the offensive in depth.



Offensive of Rifle Corps and Division According to Prewar Views

Key:

1. Axis of troop and air strikes 2. Suppression of defense by artillery 3. Suppression of defense by aviation

It is essential to bear in mind that, regardless of the depth of echeloning the division's (regiment's) battle formation, provision was made to assign a portion of the forces to the reserve (combined arms and antitank) in the event of surprises which could arise in the course of offensive combat, for reinforcing the antitank forces of the battle formations and for rapid advance in exploiting the success of the offensive.

The manuals and instructions existing in the prewar years did not set the width of the zone of advance. However, as practice was to show, a rifle corps, in advancing in the army first echelon and on the axis of the main thrust, could receive a zone 18-20 km wide. A rifle division reinforced with tanks and artillery advanced in a zone 5-7 km wide. However, under the influence of the experience of fighting on the Khalkhin-Gol River and in Finland in the 1940-1941, as well as a result of the increased firepower of the enemy defenses, the width of the zone of advance was reduced and reached: 8-12 km for a rifle corps, 3-4 km for a division on the main axis and 5-6 on a secondary axis. The depth of the task for a corps was increased from 10-12 to 20km (see the diagram).

For successfully breaching a deliberately and previously occupied enemy defense to its entire tactical depth, it was essential on the main axis to establish double or triple supremacy in forces and weapons. For this reason it was felt that a rifle corps could breach the enemy defenses in the zone of an infantry division fighting on the main axis and a rifle a division in the zone of an infantry regiment.

A rifle division, in advancing in a zone of 3 km, could create the following tactical densities per km of front: 3 rifle battalions, 401 machine pistols, 97 light machine guns, 55 medium machine guns, 22 mortars, 8 antitank guns and 26 artillery guns.

Thus, a division's capability to establish the designated densities of forces ensured, in cooperation of the infantry with the artillery, tanks and aviation, the breaching of the enemy's defenses and its simultaneous neutralization to the entire tactical depth of the defenses.

The battle tasks for a rifle corps and division was divided into near and subsequent. Due to the fact that a rifle corps organized its battle formation, as a rule, in a single echelon, the depth of its battle task coincided with the depth of the tasks of the rifle divisions advancing on the main axis. The near task of a division consisted in capturing the main zone of enemy defenses (6-8 km) and the subsequent task was to exploit the success and capture the second defensive zone. For regiments the near task was to capture the position of the regimental reserves and the areas of the main artillery firing positions (3-4 km), with the subsequent task of capturing the position of the divisional reserves.

According to the theory of offensive combat in depth, the near task was to be carried out, as a rule, in the initial configuration of the battle formation, the second defensive zone should be breached and captured without a pause while the breaching of the entire tactical depth of the enemy defense was to be carried out by the corps

during the first day of an operation, that is, after 10-12 hours of fighting. Here the breach was considered achieved when the infantry had crossed the entire depth of the enemy's antipersonnel and antitank defenses, had captured or had at least neutralized enemy artillery and had repelled counterattacks by the tactical reserves.

In selecting the axis the main thrust, consideration was given to the terrain conditions, the enemy's forces and particularly that portion of the grouping the defeat of which would ensure the successful carrying out of the set task. The main thrust was launched on a certain sector of the front, where a larger portion of the corps and divisional forces had concentrated. The infantry was the basis of the combat echelons of the advancing troops. By decisive actions with the support of the other combat arms, in infantry was to determine the outcome of combat. The infantry commenced its advance from a forming-up area that was not more than 300 meters distant from the forward edge of the enemy defenses, and went over to the assault, when the first tank echelon reached the forward defensive zone and the artillery shifted its fire in depth. The assault was to commence simultaneously in the entire zone of the rifle corps and be carried nonstop night and day.⁽⁵⁾ For organizing continuous artillery fire support for the infantry and tanks, forward artillery observers were moved up into the battle formations of the companies and battalions.

The first combat echelon of a rifle division was assigned for crossing the main defensive zone. The second echelon was committed for building up the force of the attack and for exploiting the success. Pursuit of the retreating enemy was to be carried out by the forward detachments.

The draft of the 1941 Field Manual envisaged that the defenses would be breached by mechanized formations with the tank attack being the main method of fighting. The motorized infantry was to advance behind the tanks and this would clear the breakthrough area of the remnants of the enemy, it would reinforce the captured facilities, widen the breakthrough and support the flanks and rear of the tank formations. The rifle formations were to advance behind the motorized infantry. The tanks were the strike force for breaching the defenses. In cooperation with artillery and aviation, they destroyed weapons, disrupted the fire plan of the defending troops and blazed a trail for the attacking infantry to the entire breakthrough depth of the enemy tactical defenses. Special tank support weapons were assigned for support and their task was to combat the antitank guns. Two types of tank groups were established: long-range (DD) and infantry support (TPP). A long-range tank group after brief artillery softening up was to break into the area of the enemy's divisional reserves and artillery and destroy them, and then the infantry support tanks would go over to the attack, leading the infantry behind them.

After the conducted exercises and considering the experience of the Soviet-Finnish War, the DD groups were abolished and in the draft of the 1941 Field Manual they

were no longer planned. The battle formation of the tanks (TPP) was to be formed up in three echelons. The first echelon comprised of heavy tanks was to neutralize the enemy defenses and destroy the artillery. The second echelon was made up of medium tanks. This moved up behind the first echelon, neutralizing and destroying the medium machine guns and antitank guns deep in the defenses. The third echelon which included light tanks led the infantry, neutralizing the enemy personnel and weapons.

The first echelon tanks attacked the forward edge when the infantry was preparing for its rush and the artillery was shifting its fire from the forward edge in depth. With an offensive against the enemy positioned behind strong natural obstacles or behind heavy antitank obstacles, the tanks advanced after the infantry, artillery and aviation had shattered the forward defensive edge.

However, these new provisions did not become predominant for all the command personnel, and during the first year of the war they were basically guided by the provisions of PU-36 and the draft of PU-39. The main reasons for this were the lax demands on commander training and the rudimentariness of the combat training methods. The actual level of combat training for our Armed Forces on the eve of the war did not conform fully to the demands of the situation.

The artillery was assigned a major role in the theory of combat in depth. In possessing great strength and firepower, it was assigned to suppress and destroy personnel and equipment as well as for destroying man-made structures.

The artillery groups were divided into infantry support groups (PP), long-range (DD), destruction (AR) and antiaircraft artillery groups (ZAG). The first three softened up and supported the assault and subsequent advance by the infantry and tanks to the entire depth of the enemy defenses while the ZAG covered the battle formation against air raids. The artillery support for offensive combat was planned to the entire depth of breaching the main zone of enemy defenses and included artillery softening up, artillery support for the assault and artillery for support for battle in depth.

Artillery softening up was aimed at disrupting the enemy fire plan, neutralizing enemy artillery, destroying detected antitank guns and so forth. This was carried out in daylight and sometimes at night ending at dawn. Its length was determined by the available forces, the time required to carry out the task and by other factors. Sometimes for destroying heavily fortified defenses, there was a period of destruction fire prior to the start of the artillery softening up. Its length was 1.5 hour and more while the period of destruction fire could commence several days before the offensive. The artillery softening up for the assault ended with intense shelling against the forward edge.

The artillery support for the assault was aimed at preventing the enemy from restoring the destroyed fire plan and to support the rush the infantry and tanks into the assault for capturing the forward edge and developing combat in depth. The artillery support was provided by the rolling barrage method or by the method of the successive concentration of fire against the most important defensive objectives and was also employed in combination of rolling barrage to a depth of 1.5-2 km and then the successive concentration of fire. The elaboration of these methods was a major achievement in developing artillery tactics.

Air operations were planned in accord with the theory of combat in depth on a massed basis and in close cooperation with the infantry, tanks and airborne forces. Air support for a rifle corps and division consisted of air softening up and air support for the assault and battle in depth. The air softening up was carried in the period preceding the artillery softening up. However, if it was conducted simultaneously, it was coordinated in time with the artillery softening up. During the support period, the aviation prevented enemy counterattacks, it prevented the moving up of reserves, and obstructed the retreat and taking up of a second defensive zone.

One of the most important conditions for achieving success in combat was the organizing of cooperation between the combat arms. The basic task of cooperation was the coordinating of the efforts and actions of all the combat arms, aviation and special troops in terms of target, time and place.

The organizing of cooperation was carried by the combined-arms commander who conducted all the main work in the field, calling in all the commanders of the subunits, units and formations fighting, respectively, in the zones of the rifle corps, division and regiment. Here the actions of artillery and aviation were coordinated in supporting the infantry and tanks in their assault, the capturing of the forward edge and the offensive deep in the defenses. Thus, with the start of the assault, the artillery was to fire at the detected antitank guns and at areas of their supposed location. During this time, the tanks, under the cover of the artillery fire, neutralized the enemy machine guns and artillery; the infantry moving behind the tanks was to assault the centers of enemy resistance and aid the tanks with its weapons. Simultaneously aviation by powerful strikes neutralized the weapons, troop accumulations, accompanying the infantry and tanks to the entire depth of the offensive.

Battle was controlled by the corps and divisional commanders from command posts located on the axis of the main thrust. A command post consisted of the commander's observation post and, when necessary, an additional observation post, an operations group and a signals center. For better organizing cooperation, the joint positioning of the command posts of the combined-arms commanders and the commanders of the supporting subunits and units was recommended.

Thus, the theory of offensive combat in depth was worked out on the basis of the military-technical foundation of the Soviet Armed Forces as developed during the prewar years considering the achievement of Soviet military science and the experience of the first period of World War II. Conclusions were drawn which clarified and developed individual questions. However, far from all the recommendations worked out by Soviet military science were not able to be carried out, for the Soviet state still did not possess the proper materiel for realizing its conclusions. The nation's economy did not fully ensure the equipping of the Armed Forces with an amount of new weapons and military equipment which would be required according to the conclusions of military theory. There were also other, including subjective, reasons related to the events of 1937-1938. As a whole, the theory of combat in depth was a fundamentally new theory reflecting the qualitative changes which had occurred in the development and outfitting of the troops. Its basic provisions were advanced and met the spirit of the demands of the approaching war. The troops and staffs were guided by them in combat training and then in the combat practices of the war until 1943. They have largely maintained their significance under present-day conditions as well.

Footnotes

1. "Taktika" [Tactics], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1966, p 18.
2. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyny 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 3, 1975, p 419.
3. "Vremennyy polevoy ustav RKKA 1936 g. (PU-36)" [Provisional 1936 RKKA Field Manual (PU-36)], Moscow, Gosvoenizdat, 1937, p 102.
4. "Istoriya voyn i voyennogo iskusstva" [History of Wars and Military Art], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1970, pp 110-111.
5. "Voprosy taktiki v sovetskikh voyennykh trudakh" [Questions of Tactics in Soviet Military Works], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1970, p 94.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal", 1988.
10272

Breaching Enemy Defenses

00010034e Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press
24 Feb 88) pp 34-40

[Article by Maj Gen (Res) A.P. Maryshev, candidate of historical sciences: "Breaching Enemy Defenses"; the article was written from the experience of the Great Patriotic War]

[Text] In the 1930s, Soviet military science elaborated a theory of an offensive operation in depth. In this significant attention was given to the questions of breaching

the defense. Many provisions of this theory were tested out in the troops maneuvers in 1935-1936, in the fighting in the area of Lake Khasan and the Khalkhin-Gol River as well as during the war against Finland. The Great Patriotic War largely confirmed the validity of the pre-war theoretical views. At the same time it posed a number of new problems which had to be resolved directly in the course of hostilities.

In the first offensive operations, due to the shortage of forces, time and combat experience, a breakthrough was carried out with little fire damage to the enemy and with insufficient coordination of actions. The enemy defenses were breached in broad zones or on several narrow separated axes of varying importance. This led to a situation where the pace of breaching the defenses, regardless of the shallow depth and poor strength, was slow and the breach was carried out usually by the successive capturing of positions and strongpoints. For example, the breaching of the main zone of enemy defenses some 4-5 km deep by the Western Front in the Moscow Counteroffensive lasted 2 days. Such an offensive was accompanied by heavy losses and frequently, without reaching the goal, petered out even in the tactical zone or near operational depth.

The Soviet Command closely studied and generalized the experience of the first offensive operations, it promptly disclosed shortcomings and worked steadily to eliminate them. Having generalized the experience of breaching the defenses in the 1941 offensive operations, Hq SHC [Headquarters Supreme High Command] in the Directive Letter of 10 January 1942 pointed out that the most important factor in the successful breaching of enemy defenses is the bold massing of forces on the breakthrough sector and continuous fire support for the advancing troops. For breaching enemy defenses to the entire depth, this document stated, in the practices of our armies and fronts it was essential to replace operations by the individual divisions positioned along the front in the form of an extended chain, by actions of assault groups concentrated on one sector and the artillery softening up should be replaced by an artillery offensive. For breaching the defenses the armies had to establish assault groupings consisting of 3-4 divisions and on a front with several armies.(1) These recommendations were subsequently worked out in detail and reinforced in the draft of the 1943 Field Manual, in the directive, order and other documents.

The essence of the breakthrough consisted in creating breaches in the deliberate defensive zones (line, positions) occupied by enemy troops for the subsequent exploitation of the offensive in depth and toward the flanks. The defenses were breached by hitting the main enemy grouping on the selected axis using the fire of all types of weapons, by air strikes and by a decisive offensive of the rifle, tank and mechanized troops.

The most difficult and most important task was the breaching of the tactical defensive zone. The successful realization of this made it possible to destroy the main

enemy forces and disrupt the stability of enemy defenses and, as a rule, provided the achieving of the goal for the offensive operation within the planned time. Unsuccessful actions by the troops during the period of breaching the tactical zone led to the failure of the offensive or forced a substantial change in the initial plans. An example of this could be the offensive operations by the Southern Front in July 1943 on the Mius River, the Western Front at the end of 1943 and the beginning of 1944 on the Belorussian sector, the First Baltic Front in the Vitebsk area in February 1944 and certain others.

This is why not only the commanders of the fronts and their staffs but also Hq SHC through its representatives in a majority of instances were involved in preparing the breakthrough.

In preparing for the operation it was important to choose the breakthrough sector and determine its width. The sectors were selected at the weakest point of the enemy's defenses and on terrain permitting effective employment of the various combat arms, particularly tank and mechanized. The width of the breakthrough sector was determined chiefly by the possibility of establishing the required superiority over the enemy in forces, primarily artillery, or ensuring the breach of the enemy defenses in a short period of time and exploiting the offensive at a rapid pace.

Most often a front breached the defenses on two and more rarely one or three sectors from 20 to 30 km wide and this depended upon the situation, the scope and intention of the operation. A combined-arms army was usually assigned one breakthrough sector some 6-14 km wide. Thus, in the Belorussian Operation the First Belorussian Front breached the defenses on two sectors with a total width of 29 km. The width of one breakthrough sector on the First Baltic Front equalled 25 km.(2) In the Vistula-Oder Operation, the overall width of the two breakthrough sectors of the First Belorussian Front was 30 km.(3)

As a whole, from the experience of the Great Patriotic War the breakthrough sectors on a front usually had a width of 7-12 percent of the overall zone of advance. Here they concentrated some 40-60 percent of the rifle troops, 70-80 percent of the artillery, up to 90 percent of the tanks and virtually all the aviation. This made it possible to establish operational densities of the forces as follows: one rifle for 1-2 km, 200-250 and more guns and mortars, 50-85 tanks and SAU [self-propelled artillery mount], including 17-25 close support tanks (see the Table). The experience of the war showed that such densities of forces insured the breaching of the defenses and the continuation of the offensive to a great depth.

Massing and Densities of Forces on Breakthrough Sectors in Certain Offensive Operations*

Operations, fronts	zone of adv., km	width of bkttr., % of zone of adv.	Operational densities of forces km per rif. div.		guns, mortars (76 mm & +) per km		Tanks, SAU per km	
			a	b	a	b	a	b
Stalingrad								
Southwestern Front	245	8.1	10.7	2.7	21	70	2.1	29.3
Belgorod-Khar'kov								
Voronezh Front	160	11.3	5	1.9	53.9	215.8	13.5	70
Steppe Front	90	12	4	1.3	57.5	230	5.5	42
Belorussian								
1st Belorussian Fr. (rt. wing)	230	12.6	5.8	1.3	36	204	5.6	45
East Prussian								
2d Belorussian Front	285	9.8	4.3	1.3	39	238	7.7	74
Berlin								
2nd Belorussian Front	120	11.6	3.3	0.6	49.5	233.5	7.9	20.5

* The table was compiled from: "Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945" [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945], Vol 2, 1958, p 275; Vol 4, pp 42, 43; *Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal*, No 7, 1968, p 88; No 6, 1964, pp 77, 80; No 2, 1965, p 85; No 4, 1965, pp 84, 85.

Key: a—for entire zone of advance; b—in breakthrough sector.

The decisive massing of forces on the breakthrough sectors by weakening the other sectors made it possible with an overall insignificant superiority and sometimes even with an equality of forces, to establish a 3-5-fold superiority on the main axes and this showed the high art of the Soviet Command.

As forces grew and the enemy increased the depth of defenses, the operational configuration of the troops also improved. The breakthrough began to be carried out by strong assault groupings which had a deep configuration. Their strength each time was determined depending upon the situation and the intent of the operation. There was a general trend of the qualitative reinforcing of all elements in the operational configuration as well as the establishing of new ones.

At the outset of the war, due to the shortage of forces, the operational configuration of the fronts on the offensive was basically single echelon with weak reserves and aviation. The armies sometimes assigned a second echelon or reserve consisting of one or two divisions. In a number of instances a mobile group was organized from cavalry formations and individual tank brigades.

As the forces increased, the depth of the troop operational configuration rose. The commanders of the fronts and armies, in addition to strong echelons, established second ones as well as strong mobile groups consisting of tank, mechanized and cavalry formations and strong

reserves of all combat arms. From the summer of 1943, the second echelon of a front consisted, as a rule, of one and sometimes two combined-arms armies, the mobile group included one or two and sometimes three tank armies. In the combined-arms armies advancing on the main axes, in addition to the first echelon which consisted usually of two rifle corps, a strong second echelon was established of one and sometimes two rifle corps. In addition, such armies had mobile groups of one or two tank or mechanized corps as well as antiaircraft artillery and artillery groups, artillery antitank reserves and mobile obstacle construction detachments.

As a whole, the significant strengthening of the first operational echelon made it possible to solve more successfully the problem of breaching the enemy defenses while the presence of large forces in the second echelons and reserves ensured the possibility of boosting the effort in the course of the fighting and maintaining the required superiority over the enemy to the entire depth of the operation. The experience of successfully carrying out these tasks has kept its importance for the offensive operations under present-day conditions.

The breakthrough, as a rule, was preceded by a reconnaissance in force. This was carried out by reinforced rifle battalions assigned from the first echelon divisions. The

aim of this was to conduct a follow-up reconnaissance of the enemy defenses, to detect the true configuration of the forward edge and make certain that the enemy had not pulled its troops back. This provided an opportunity not to carry out the artillery and air softening up against empty space.

The task of fire damage was carried out in the course of the artillery and air softening up for the assault. The success of breaching the main zone and the entire tactical defensive zone depended upon carrying this out. In the first offensive operations, due to the shortage of artillery, aviation and ammunition, the fire damage to the enemy defenses was poor. Artillery densities usually did not exceed 70-80 guns and mortars per km of breakthrough sector. A large portion of the mortars, due to their small caliber, were unable to fire no farther than to a depth of 1.5-2.5 km. The density of bombing strikes did not exceed 5-8 tons per sq km of target area. For this reason, during the period of the artillery softening up, the enemy defenses were neutralized to the depth of the first position, and with the start of the assault, due to the shortage of ammunition, the artillery ceased fire or provided support to a depth of just 1-1.5 km. The slow breakthrough rates were to be explained by this as well as by the insufficient saturation of the rifle troops with tanks. Some 2-3 and more days were spent on breaking through the tactical zone and the main forces of the fronts were consumed.

Subsequently the art of fire damage developed by decisive massing of weapons on the breakthrough sectors and by increased effectiveness of their combat employment, the increased depth and the achieving of continuous fire effect against the enemy. The high degree of artillery massing on the breakthrough sectors was achieved chiefly by shifting artillery from secondary sectors and maneuvering the formations and units of the RVGK [Reserve of the Supreme High Command].

The continuous increased number and improved quality of the artillery brought about the development of the theory and practice of its combat employment and this was basically carried out by the artillery groupings and shifting from an artillery softening up to an artillery offensive.

Up to 1944, the artillery groups during the period of breaching the enemy defenses were established depending upon the nature of the tasks to be carried out (support for infantry, long-range destruction, counter-battery bombardment and so forth). This impeded command of them by the combined-arms commanders and as a result of this the effective employment of artillery was reduced directly in the interests of the rifle (tank) units and formations. Subsequently for ensuring close cooperation with the advancing troops and dependable control, the artillery concentrated on the breakthrough sector was united into artillery groups subordinate to the

combined-arms commanders according to the tactical-organizational principle (regimental, divisional, corps and army artillery groups). Thus, the possibility was provided for each of these to influence the course of battle by artillery fire.

The changeover to the practice of an artillery offensive made it possible to continuously support the infantry and tanks by massed artillery fire during the entire offensive. For this purpose they planned three periods for the combat activity of the artillery: the artillery softening up for the assault, the artillery support for the assault and artillery support for infantry and tank actions deep in the enemy defenses.

The art of conducting the artillery offensive itself was constantly improved. Thus, the artillery softening up for the assault was developed by shortening the duration with a simultaneous rise in fire intensity. While in the summer of 1943, this was carried out for 2-2.5 hours, by the end of the war it was 40-20 minutes. Here the time for intense shelling was constantly increased. By the end of the war the duration of the first intense shelling had risen, in comparison with 1941-1943, from 3-5 to 10-25 minutes. In certain operations, the artillery softening up for the assault was carried out as a single powerful intense shelling lasting 20-25 minutes. This ensured the more dependable damage to the enemy prior to the assault and significantly contributed to the surprise of the offensive.

The improved quality of artillery made it possible to constantly increase the depth of simultaneous fire damage to the enemy defenses during the period of artillery softening up. While in the first period of the war the basic mass of artillery could fire to a range of 1.5-2.5 km, in the following period it was to 10-12 km(4), this meant that during the artillery softening up for the attack the entire main zone came under fire.

After the artillery softening up, the artillery switched to supporting the infantry and tanks which had gone over to the assault. Prior to 1943, artillery support was carried out chiefly by the method of successive concentration of fire (PSO) to a depth of not more 2-3 km. From 1943, this was carried out combining a rolling barrage (1.5-2 km deep) with the PSO, and from 1944, in addition to this, they began employing a double rolling barrage (to a depth of 2-2.5 km) which ensured a high pace of breaching the defenses. Thus, the depth of support for the assault was constantly increased and by the war's end reached 3-4 km and more, that is, to the depth of the first two positions of the enemy defenses.

Artillery support for the tank and infantry actions in depth was carried out by concentrated and massed fire by the artillery groups against the major installations in the enemy defenses. Here a major role was played by the rocket artillery. It possessed high maneuvering capabilities and this made it possible in a short period of time to prepare and launch massed strikes.

The organizing of air armies and the incorporation of them in the fronts, the shift from air support to an air offensive, the equipping of the aircraft with radios as well as the introduction of radar made it possible to significantly increase the role of aviation in carrying out the breakthrough. The density of bomber strikes per sq km of target area rose from 17-20 tons in 1943 to 100 and more by the war's end.

Thus, the greater artillery density on the breakthrough sectors, the longer time for intense shelling as well as the greater force of the air strikes during the period of air softening up ensured the dependable damage to the enemy defenses and a high rate of their breakthrough.

The prompt build-up of forces in the aim of quickly the crossing the enemy defenses and exploiting success at a rapid pace in the operational depth was ensured by committing the second echelons and reserves to battle (to the engagement). Thus, for taking the second position and for widening the breakthrough toward the flanks usually the second or third echelons or reserves of the regiments were committed to battle, and sometimes the second echelons of divisions were thrown into action. For breaching the third position and for completing the breakthrough of the main defensive zone, the second echelons of divisions were committed and frequently the second echelons of the corps and the mobile army groups. For example, in the Orel Operation the second echelon of the XVI Guards Rifle Corps of the 11th Guards Army (1st Guards Rifle Division) was committed to battle for breaching the third position while in the zone of advance of the adjacent VIII Guards Rifle Corps the army mobile group (V Tank Corps) was committed to battle for carrying out the same task.

After breaching the main defensive zone, the rapid reaching of the second zone and its breaching without a pause were considered to be an important task. A decisive condition for successfully carrying out this task was a high rate of advance and the prompt of buildup of effort as this deprived the enemy of the opportunity to shift reserves and stiffen defenses in the second zone. For this purpose even in period of completing the breach of the first zone, forward or special mobile detachments (tank groups) were sent out from the first echelon divisions and armies. Usually tank groups were established in those armies which did not have their own mobile groups. These including, as a rule, tank and self-propelled artillery units and formations which in breaching the main zone had fought as close support tanks. For ensuring the independence of the forward detachments, the tank and mobile groups were reinforced with artillery units and subunits.

In using the spaces in the enemy's defenses and in outflanking major strongpoints, the forward detachments and the tank and mobile groups quickly continued the offensive in the second zone, they captured important objectives in it and created conditions for its breaching by the main army forces without a pause.

Aviation played an important role in the capture of the second zone without a pause. It conducted reconnaissance, it provided an air cover for the troops rushing to the second zone, and launched attacks against the retreating enemy, its strongpoints and centers of resistance on the axes of advance of the forward detachments and mobile groups as well as against reserves being moved up to defend the second zone.

However, the experience of the offensive operations showed that it was not always possible to breach the second zone without a pause. When the main zone was breached slowly, the enemy gained the necessary time for reinforcing the defenses of the second zone. In these instances the breaching of the later was carried out after rapid preparations usually made during a single night. This time was employed for follow-up reconnaissance for the enemy defenses, for clarifying the tasks, for carrying out the necessary regroupings and preparing the troops for the breakthrough. The offensive was resumed on the morning of the next day. The assault, as a rule, was preceded by a brief (20-40 minutes) but powerful artillery and air softening up. For example, in the Berlin Operation the 8th Guards Army reached the second zone by the end of the first day. All attempts to breach it without a pause were unsuccessful. It was decided to resume the offensive on the morning of the following day and employ the nighttime for preparing the breakthrough. For this purpose a rifle division was shifted from a different sector to the right flank where the army formations had been most successful. Here also the regrouped a tank corps from the front's army. During the night reconnaissance was carried out and the battle tasks and questions of cooperation clarified. As a result, in the morning of 17 April, after a 15-minute artillery shelling, the army offensive was resumed.(5)

The close support tanks played an enormous role in breaching the enemy defenses. The experience of the war was to show that for successfully breaching a deliberate defense it was essential to have 40-50 close support tanks per km of breakthrough sector. However, it was impossible to establish such densities using individual brigades and regiments. For this reason, sometimes for increasing the density of the close support tanks, a portion of them was withdrawn from the individual tank corps (Stalingrad Counteroffensive) and even tank armies (Vistula-Oder Operation) and assigned for the period of breaching the tactical defensive zone to the rifle divisions. After breaching the tactical defensive zone, these tanks returned to their formations and field forces. Moreover, the shortage of close support tanks as well as the desire to maintain a high breakthrough rate forced the commanders in virtually each offensive operation to involve in the breakthrough individual tank and mechanized corps and even tank armies. Here the corps (mobile groups of the combine-arms armies) were even involved in completing the breakthrough of the main zone, while the armies (mobile groups of fronts) were usually committed to battle piecemeal or completely for concluding the breakthrough of the entire tactical defensive zone. Such

employment of the formations and field forces of armored and mechanized troops naturally reduced their capability of exploiting the offensive in depth, but this had to be done as there was not other possibility for maintaining the high breakthrough rate, when the threat arose of the aborting of the operation's plan.

Consequently, the decision massing of forces, the deep configuration of the assault groupings on the breakthrough sectors and the continuously increasing art of their combat employment made it possible to increase significantly the pace of breaching the tactical defensive zone. This was one of the crucial factors in achieving the goal of the operations. While during the first offensive operations 2 or 3 days spent for breaching the weak and relatively shallow (3-4 km) enemy defenses, during the third period of the war the tactical defensive zone some 12 and more km deep was often breached during the first day of an operation.(6)

After the breaching of the tactical defensive zone, the most important task for the troops was the rapid development of the offensive into the operational depth. It was essential to anticipate the enemy in coming out on the rear defensive lines. This task was carried out by the joint efforts of all the troops of a front. However, the chief role was played by the formations and field forces of the armored and mechanized troops which made up the follow-up echelons (mobile groups) of the fronts and armies.

Thus, the experience of the Great Patriotic War showed that for the successful breaching of enemy defenses, it was essential:

a) to reconnoiter carefully and suppress dependably the enemy defenses by fire;

b) to wide quickly the breach toward the flanks and see to it that the driving of the troops into individual areas merged into a common breakthrough on a broad front;

c) to carry out the breakthrough rapidly so that the enemy would not have the time take up previously prepared defensive lines in depth and establish strong counterstrike groupings;

d) to win and hold air supremacy, to provide a dependable cover for the assault groupings against enemy air strikes;

e) to isolate the breakthrough sectors from the influx of additional enemy troops from the interior and from less active sectors.

The combat experience gained during the years of the Great Patriotic War was one of the most important conditions for the further development of the theory and practice of the breakthrough of a deliberate defense. It has largely not lost its importance in our days. The main

principles for organizing and carrying out the breakthrough and namely: the able choice of the breakthrough sectors and the skillful organizing of assault groupings, carefulness and covertness of preparations, the winning of air supremacy, dependable fire damage, the creating and maintaining of the required superiority over the enemy in the course of the breakthrough, its rapid exploitation in depth and widening toward the flanks—not only have not lost their importance but, conversely, have acquired even greater acuteness and timeliness. The acquired combat experience can and should be employed in solving the problem of the breakthrough under present-day conditions.

Footnotes

1. "Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna 1941-1945: Entsiklopediya" [The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945: an Encyclopedia], Moscow, Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1985, p 242.

2. "Operatsii Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne 1941-1945" [Operations of the Soviet Armed Forces in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 3, 1958, pp 295-299, 302.

3. Ibid., Vol 4, 1959, pp 106-107.

4. "Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna...", p 66.

5. "Obshchevoyskovaya armiya v nastuplenii" [The Combined-Arms Army on the Offensive], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1966, p 112.

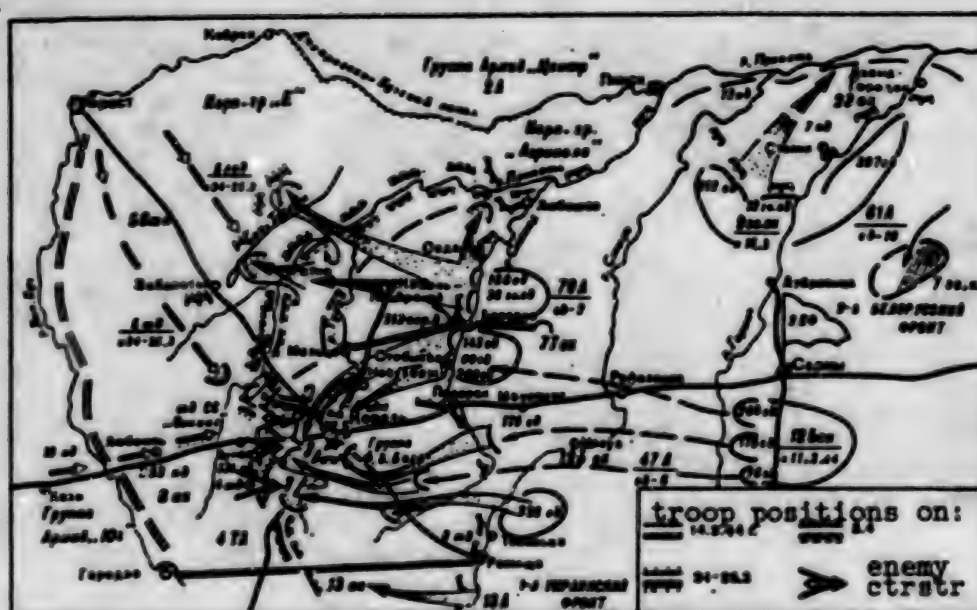
6. "Istoriya voyennogo iskusstva: Uchebnik dlya voyennykh akademi Sovetskikh Vooruzhennykh Sil" [The History of Military Art: A Textbook for the Military Academies of the Soviet Armed Forces], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1984, p 388.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal", 1988.
10272

Offensive of Second Belorussian Front in Polesye
00010034f Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press
24 Feb 88) pp 41-48

[Article by Lt Col (Ret) S.N. Mikhalev: "Offensive of Second Belorussian Front in Polesye"]

[Text] The Polesye Offensive Operation (15 March-5 April 1944) holds a special place among the operations of the third period of the Great Patriotic War. It was carried out with limited forces on an independent axis in an inaccessible wooded swampy area under the conditions of the spring mud and lack of roads. This caused a



Polesye Offensive Operation of Second Belorussian Front (15 March-5 April 1944)

number of particular features in carrying out the operational tasks and determined as a whole its important significant for the development of Soviet military art.

The overall plan of Hq SHC in conducting the operation proceeded from the operational-strategic situation existing by the spring of 1944 on the southern wing of the Soviet-German Front. During the course of the winter Soviet troops offensive on the Right-Bank Ukraine between the fronts fighting on the western and southwestern strategic axes, by mid February a significant gap had formed in the area of the Pripyat Basin. Here along a sector of more than 300 km from the mouth of the Ptichya (to the west of Mozyr) to Rozhishche (to the north of Lutsk), there were active the troops of the 61st Army of the Belorussian Front (8 rifle divisions and 6 cavalry divisions) and three divisions from the LXXIII Rifle Corps of the 13th Army of the First Ukrainian Front. In preparing for the spring offensive, Hq SHC, in planning to concentrate the main efforts in the zone of the First and Second Ukrainian Fronts in the aim of defeating the enemy Army Group South and reaching the Carpathians, considered the danger which arise to the exposed right flank of the First Ukrainian Front (as its main forces advanced to southwest there was a growing real threat of enemy counterstrike from the Lwow area). In line with this, on 17 February 1944, a new front which was called the Second Belorussian (the Belorussian Front here was renamed the First Belorussian) was established to support the right wing of the strategic Soviet troop grouping in the Right-Bank Ukraine and initiate active operations on the independent Kovel-Brest axis on the boundary of the Belorussian and First Ukrainian Fronts. The front's commander was

Col Gen P.A. Kurochkin who had previously commanded the Northwestern Front, the military council member was Lt Gen F.Ye. Bokov and the chief of staff was Lt Gen V.Ya. Kolpachki.

The front included: the 61st Army (commander, Lt Gen P.A. Belov), the headquarters of the 47th Army (commander Lt Gen V.S. Polenov), the 70th Army (commander, Lt Gen I.F. Nikolayev), the CXXV Rifle Corps (commander, Maj Gen F.A. Parkhomenko; from 28 March 1944, Maj Gen M.S. Filipovskiy) and the 6th Air Army (commander, Lt Gen Avn F.P. Polynin) from the Reserve of the Supreme High Command (RVGK) as well as the Dnieper Naval Flotilla (commander, Capt 1st Rank V.V. Grigoryev). (1)

On 4 March 1944, Hq SHC gave the Second Belorussian Front the task of preparing and carrying out an offensive operation in the aim of having the main forces come out at the Western Bug on the sector of Brest, Grodno and the right wing at the Pripyat in the sector of Turów, Davyd Gorodok, Stolin. The axis of the main thrust was set for Kovel, and important junction of railroads and highways. Its capture would ensure a freedom of maneuvering on the Brest, Kholm and Vladimir-Volynskiy axes. Upon reaching the Western Bug, the troops of the front were to deeply envelop the enemy Army Group Center from the south, having thereby provided favorable conditions for conducting operations to liberate Belorussia and Poland (see the diagram). The front was ordered to go over to the offensive on 12-15 March.

For carrying out the set task the front was to include: 22 rifle divisions, 6 cavalry divisions and 3 air divisions, a tank brigade, 5 separate tank regiments, up to 20 artillery

(mortar) regiments and other units. However, by the start of the offensive not all of the troops had been concentrated in the front's zone. Certain formations

arrived during the already commenced operation. The designated strength of the front actually existed only during the concluding stage of the operation (Table 1).

Table 1. Effective Strength of Second Belorussian Front*

Forces	Field Forces 61st Army	70th Army	47th Army	Front reserves	Total for front
Rif. divs.	10/9	2/4	6/10	—/2	18/25
Cav. divs.	3/—	—	—	3/6	6/6
Tank brig.	1/—	—	—	—/1	1/1
Tank & SAU reg.	2**/—	—	1/5	2**/4**	5/9
Total pers., 1000 men	68.2	16.3	50.1	14.8	149.4
	51.9	43.4	60.5	41.6	197.4
Guns & mortars	1458	425	937	219	3039
	1238	648	1564	692	4142
Tanks & SAU	58/12	—	21/61	41/118	120/191
Combat aircraft	—	—	—	—	122***/181

Note. The numerator gives the data as of 15 March and the denominator, as of 5 April. * Compiled from data of TsAMO [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense]: folio 237, inv. 2472, file 8, sheets 20-23; folio 402, inv. 99611, file 23, sheets 106, 148; folio 418, inv. 10736, file 23, sheets 58, 59, 63, 64; folio 427, inv. 11143, file 26, sheets 8, 10.

** As part of cavalry corps.

*** As of 18 March 1944.

In comparison with their TOE size, the rifle divisions of the front were over 40 percent below strength in personnel and numbered from 4,000 to 6,000 men. As a whole this was characteristic for a majority of the formations in the operational army by the start of the third period of the war due to the significant losses suffered by the Soviet troops in the 1943 summer-autumn campaign. The divisions arriving from the RVGK were manned according to temporary TOE and had up to 7,100-7,300 men.

A comparison of the effective strength of the Second Belorussian Front with the other fronts fighting on the Right-Bank Ukraine shows that this was the smallest operational field force on the southwestern strategic sector. Thus, the First Ukrainian Front which in March of 1944 had a zone of advance just 50 km wider than the Second Belorussian Front had 3.3 fold more rifle divisions, 6 fold more personnel, 4 fold more guns, mortars and aircraft, and 9.5 fold more tanks and SAU.(2)

On the defensive ahead of the Second Belorussian Front on the line of the Pripyat were troops from the right wing of the 2nd Army of Army Group Center and in the Kovel area, formations from the 4th Panzer Army of Army Group South. On the southern bank of the Pripyat in the area of Davyd Gorodok, Stolin and Pinak, the enemy held an extensive bridgehead up to 70 km along the front and 30 km in depth. A 60-km section of the front along

the western bank of the Stokhod to Lyubeshov to the Kovel—Sarny railroad was covered by weak forces, by garrisons of the separate strongpoints.

The Kovel area was an important center in the system of the enemy defenses. Here there was a composite group of SS troops under von Bach (from 15 March, the Hille Group) numbering over 8,500 men. Kovel itself was well reinforced. The tactical and near operational enemy reserves on this sector were made up of units of a German security division, two Hungarian infantry divisions and the Panzer Division SS Viking which had been recreated after the defeat suffered in the area of Korsun Shevchenkivskiy.(3) The combat area—the Polesye (the Pripyat Basin)—is a flat forested lowland with numerous lakes and swamps cut by a dense network of rivers and canals. The Pripyat tributaries of the Stokhod, Turiya, Vyzhevka and the Pripyat itself in its upper courses form a series of natural barriers which are difficult to cross under the conditions of springtime flooding. The road network is little developed and the advance of the troops off the roads, due to the extensive swamps, was significantly difficult. This area has traditionally been considered unsuitable for combat by large masses of troops. For example, in the 1941 summer campaign the main forces of the enemy Army Groups Center and South outflanked it to the north and south. Thus, the development of a front-level operation by the Soviet troops in the Polesye was a surprise for the enemy.

The plan of the commander of the Second Belorussian Front took into account the particular features of the enemy grouping and the terrain conditions in zone of the forthcoming offensive. According to the overall plan of the operation, in the aim of encircling and destroying the Kovel enemy grouping, the main thrust around Kovel from the north and south was to be launched by the 47th Army. The 70th Army was given the task, in advancing on the Brest axis, to capture Kamen-Kashirskiy. The 60th Army was to eliminate the enemy bridgehead on the southern bank of the Pripyat in the Stolin area.(4) Subsequently, the 47th and 70th Armies were to come out at the Western Bug. The depth of the near task for the assault grouping armies of the front was planned for 40-50 km and the further task 120-130 km.

The zone of advance for the front over 350 km. Because of this its operational configuration was single-echelon. The 70th Army was committed to battle on the boundary between the 61st and 47th Armies. The VII Guards Cavalry Corps was assigned to the front's rear and prior to 14 March this unit had been in the zone of the 61st Army and with the start of the offensive was moved up in the zone of the 47th Army, to the Kovel axis.

A particular feature of the overall plan of the operation was that the thrust by the front's main forces (47th and 70th Armies) was to be launched on the boundary of the Army Groups Center and South which was poorly covered by enemy troops. Here the front's assault grouping was to advance to the west while the right-flank 61st Army was to fight with its front to the north. The assault grouping armies, in turn, were to advance along divergent axes: the 70th toward Kamen-Kashirskiy, Brest, and the 47th to Kovel, Lyuboml.(5) In continuing the offensive toward Brest, our troops were to come out deep in the rear of Army Group Center and, in advancing to Lyuboml, contribute to the success of the First Ukrainian Front which at this time was to conduct the Proskurov-Chernovtsy Operation (4 March-17 April 1944).

Some 10 days were given to prepare for the operation. During this time, of the 11 rifle divisions assigned to be turned over to the front from the RVGK, 7 had arrived, but just one out of the 5 tank regiments.(6) By the start of the offensive, of the 14 divisions which were to fill out front's assault grouping, only 7 had arrived in the forming-up places. By 14 March, the 61st Army had been able to shift to its left wing the headquarters of the IX Guards Rifle Corps and one division for the offensive on the Stolin axis, where its main efforts were to be concentrated. Two other divisions were turned over by the 70th Army. The 6th Air Army only by 18 March, that is, on the fourth day of the operation, had been able to shift around 70 percent of its combat strength (122 aircraft out of 181) from Nevel area to Sarny.(7)

Particularly complicated was the logistic situation for the front's troops: there were just 0.5-1.2 units of fire of ammunition, 3 loads of gasoline and 3 loads of diesel fuel.(8)

The arrival of troops for the 70th and 47th Armies, the shifting of the formations of the 61st Army and the transporting of materiel over the sole railroad mainline which was exposed to enemy air strikes. The front did not have sufficient forces for covering it. Although in the rear area of the front, a large amount of work was carried out to build and repair the roads and bridges (in the zone of the 47th Army a railroad bridge was built across the Styr and a vehicle bridge across the Goryn), it was impossible to surmount the difficulties in the concentrating of troops, in the relocating of aviation and in the delivery of materiel until the very end of the operation. The situation of the rear of the Second Belorussian Front was complicated by sabotage operations by bands of Ukrainian nationalists. For combating them the command was forced to use the few front reserves.(9)

The political bodies and party organizations carried out major work to maintain high vigilance and combat readiness in the troops. In working with the personnel from the units and formations arriving from the reserves, particular attention was paid to issuing the battle tasks, to creating high offensive drive and to preparing for fighting in the wooded and swampy terrain. Due to the lack of time and transport difficulties, the measures to prepare for the offensive were not completely carried out. A larger portion of the formations went into battle without a pause, without sufficient fire and logistic support.

The troops of the front went over to the offensive at different times, without having completed the concentrating of forces. On the main axis, the 48th Army on 13 March, launched strikes by three rifle divisions (143rd, 60th and 260th) from the line of Borovno, Velikiy Obzyr to Nesukhoyezhe around Kovel from the north and by two rifle divisions (175th and 328th) from the line of Navuz, Topilno around the city from the south. By 18 March, the army troops, in fighting under the conditions of the impassable wooded and swampy terrain, had advanced 30-40 km and had completed the encirclement of the enemy Kovel grouping, having cut the roads from Kovel to Brest and Lyuboml.

In the encirclement of the enemy, a major was played by the 143rd Rifle Division (commander, Col M.M. Zaikin). Over a period of 2 days (14-16 March), it advanced 30 km from the Nesukhoyezhe area and cut the enemy's escape route from Kovel. Here two of its regiments had been turned facing the east and a third to the west. With the approach of units from the 60th, 260th and 175th rifle divisions, all three regiments of the 143rd Rifle Division moved up to the external perimeter of encirclement, to an area 10-12 km to the west of Kovel. The second echelon of the 47th Army, the 76th Rifle Division, also moved up here. The 328th Rifle Division in fighting on the left flank of the army, reached the Kovel-Rozhishche railroad and captured Turiyskiy. Thus, by the time of the concluding of the sealing off of the Kovel enemy grouping (19 March), three rifle

divisions were fighting on each of the external and internal perimeters of encirclement. By this time the ring of encirclement had been tightened to the city outskirts.

From 19 through 26 March, three divisions from the 47th Army were heavily engaged in the capturing of Kovel, but without result. The army command had been unable to organize the storming of the city quickly. The enemy defenses and the strength of its forces had not been sufficiently reconnoitered and it was erroneously assumed that panic reigned in the blockaded garrison and it was a matter of 2 or 3 days to eliminate it.(10) The front command during this period also did not have a clear understanding of the situation in the Kovel area. In the course of the fighting it became clear that the Kovel center of resistance was a rather major barrier. At the same time, the forces of the 47th Army were being slowly built up from the RVGK. Only by 1 April had its strength been brought up to nine divisions and five tank regiments (of these, six formations and four tank units were fighting on the external perimeter of encirclement). The bad weather (rain mixing with snowfalls) and the lack of forces prevented the 6th Air Army from providing effective support for the advancing troops. The troops lacked ammunition and the impassable dirt roads impeded its prompt delivery. For transporting freight it was essential to employ aircraft from the 242nd Night Bomber Air Division and over the 5 days (26-31 March) the aircraft delivered 93 tons of ammunition to the Kovel, but this was not enough. By 27 March, the command of the front was convinced that the 47th Army was incapable of eliminating the surrounded grouping, and on the external perimeter the enemy forces had increased significantly and were threatening to breach the blockade.(11) Nevertheless, the measures to further strengthen the 47th Army and repel the relieving enemy counterstrike were late.

The 70th Army, consisting of two rifle division (160th and 38th Guards) was committed to battle on 13 March from bridgeheads on the western bank of the Stokhod on a 40-km sector from Lyubeshov to Borovno. Over a period of 5 days, its troops advanced in depth up to 60 km and by 17 March, had reached the line of the Turaki Canal, where they were halted by the arriving enemy reserves. By 29 March, the Nazis had succeeded in pushing out units and formations 10-12 km back behind the Pripyat and Vyzhevka. Thus, the 70th Army had carried out the task for the operational support of the maneuver by the 47th Army to encircle the enemy Kovel grouping, but its forces were not sufficient for defeating the approaching enemy reserves and reaching the Western Bug in the Brest area. Only by the beginning of April was it reinforced with two more divisions, but was unable to alter the situation in its zone until the end of the operation.

By the end of March and the beginning of April, in the combat zone of the 70th and 47th Armies, the enemy had concentrated up to eight divisions, including three panzer, as well as a ski-chasseur brigade and five assault gun brigades.(12) Troop command on the Kovel axis from 28 March was entrusted to the command of the 2d Army of Army Group Center. The enemy's main efforts were aimed at relieving the Kovel garrison. Having reinforced its grouping fighting along the Lyubomir-Kovel Highway with units from the 4th Panzer Division, the enemy by a concentrated strike on a narrow sector of the front breached the battle formations of the 143rd Rifle Division, and at a price of great losses on 4 April reached the Kovel area where it linked up with the surrounded units.

The offensive on the right flank of the front also developed unsuccessfully. The assault grouping of the 61st Army, the IX Guards Rifle Corps, went over to the offensive on 16 March. In fighting in a zone 24 km wide, the corps formations over a period of 10 days advanced just 4-8 km and were unable to carry out the set task. The enemy bridgehead in the Stoln area was not eliminated. By 20 March, the troops of the 61st Army had succeeded in clearing only the sector of the southern bank of the Pripyat between Mozyr and Turov. The reasons for the setbacks were the unsatisfactory organization of reconnaissance and troop control as well as the poor preparatory fire and support for the advancing troops. With a density of just 15-18 guns and mortars per km of front, the artillery was forced to fire predominantly at areas since the targets had not been reconnoitered.

At the beginning of April, upon instructions of Hq SHC, the commander of the First Belorussian Front, Army Gen K.K. Rokossovskiy, arrived in the combat area. Having familiarized himself with the situation, he concluded that it was ill-advised to conduct a partial offensive operation to liberate Kovel.(13) In line with this, by the Directive of Hq SHC of 5 April, the Second Belorussian Front was deconstituted, its troops were turned over to the First Belorussian Front while the field headquarters was put in the reserve.(14)

The Polesye Operation was marked by a number of features. Because of the rigid time for preparing it, the front's assault grouping could not be organized ahead of time. The formations were committed to battle as they arrived in the front's zone after a march of 120-150 km. Due to the fact that there was just one railroad line, this process was extended almost to the very end of the operation (see Table 2).

Table 2. Change in Effective Strength of Assault Grouping of Second Belorussian Front in Course of the Operation*

Field Forces & formations	Date	Strength of Assault Grouping		men, 1000	guns, mortars	tanks, SAU	aircraft
		Rif., cav. divs.					
70th, 47th Armies	15 Mar 44	8		66.4	1362	21	122
70th & 47th Armies, XXV Rifle & VII Gds. Cav. Corps	5 Apr 44	19		128.3	2635	128	181

* Table compiled from data of TsAMO: folio 237, inv. 2472, file 8, sheets 20-23, 45-50.

The front was advancing simultaneously on two divergent axes. The offensive by the main assault grouping commenced with limited forces in a zone up to 110 km wide, with a gap of up to 20 km between the 47th and 70th Armies. The average operational troop density at the outset of the operation was low and was around 14 km per rifle division, 12.4 guns and mortars and 0.2 tank per km of front. The zones of advance of the divisions reached significant width: in the 70th Army 15-25 km and in the 47th 12-15 km. For this reason the initial troop thrust was marked by insufficient strength, the rate of advance of the formations was low and this provided an opportunity to shift reserves to the Kovel axis and put up organized resistance to the advancing troops and then launch counterstrikes. Only by the end of the operation did the battle formations of the troops become somewhat more concentrated. By 5 April, in the area of the 47th Army some 10 divisions were deployed along a 70-km front. Here also were concentrated the front's reserves (two rifle divisions and three cavalry divisions). As a result, the operational troops density almost doubled (for tanks by 6 fold).⁽¹⁵⁾ However, no substantial superiority over the enemy was achieved, as it had also been able to boost its forces in the Kovel area.

The maneuver undertaken upon the initiative of the front command to encircle the enemy Kovel grouping was characteristic of a number of offensive operations on the Right-Bank Ukraine in the winter of 1944. In contrast to other operations, the encirclement of the enemy in the Kovel area was carried out without the involvement of mobile troops and solely by rifle formations which used areas not occupied by troops in the enemy defenses. Although they were able to close the ring around Kovel, an active external perimeter of encirclement was not created. The front's command did not employ its available reserves for this in the form of the VII Guards Cavalry Corps (three divisions) and two divisions of the XXV Rifle Corps, and this was the main reason for the inconclusiveness of the operation.

Due to the weak strength of the 6th Air Army, the delay in its redeployment and the bad weather conditions, the operation was conducted with ineffective air support. Troop command by front's staff and the army staffs was not carried out with sufficient effectiveness. The army command posts during the offensive were 20-60 km from the first echelon battle formations while the command post of the front was 150 km away. Communications on the front—army level were maintained chiefly

by telegraph and little use was made of radio. The staffs of the field forces did not have a sufficiently accurate knowledge of the situation and did not respond promptly to changes in it.

As a result of these factors and chiefly due to the shortage of forces the Second Belorussian Front was unable to completely carry out the tasks posed by Hq SHC. Nevertheless, regardless of the generally inconclusive nature of the operation and the unsuccessful outcome of the fighting against the encircled Kovel enemy grouping, the offensive in the Polesye provided substantial aid to the First Ukrainian Front in defeating the left wing of the enemy Army Group South. On the Pinsk, Brest and Kovel axes our troops tied down large enemy forces including over eight divisions with three panzer divisions. Because of this, the right flank of the First Ukrainian Front was supported at a crucial moment of the Proskurov-Chernovtsy Operation. The enemy lost over 10,000 men killed and captured, up to 100 guns and mortars, 50 tanks and 36 aircraft.⁽¹⁶⁾ Good conditions were established for launching a thrust in the flank and rear of the enemy Army Group Center, realized 3 months later in the Lublin-Brest Operation of the First Belorussian Front.

The experience of the Polesye Operation was of definite value for the development of Soviet military art during the third period of the Great Patriotic War. The troops gained practice in conducting an offensive in woody-swampy terrain and fighting along separate axes with the extensive employment of the outflanking and envelopment of the enemy strongpoints and centers of resistance. An instructive aspect of the operation was the successful execution of the maneuver to encircle the enemy by the rifle troops and the simultaneous creation of the internal and external perimeters of encirclement. The actions of the 143d Rifle Division the units of which played a major role in completing the encirclement of the Kovel grouping were an example of a bold maneuver by the troops in the operational depth. Also of interest is the build-up of the front's assault grouping in the course of the offensive by committing the arriving formations to battle. The experience by the Second Belorussian Front in Polesye, considering its shortcomings, was successfully employed during the summer Soviet troop offensive in Belorussia.

Footnotes

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 237, inv. 2757, file 71, sheet 1.

2. Ibid., folio 236, inv. 2673, file 994, sheets 144, 145.
3. Ibid., folio 500, inv. 12484, file 992 (map).
4. Ibid., folio 237, inv. 2667, file 4, sheets 18-21.
5. Ibid., inv. 2757 (map).
6. Ibid., inv. 2472, file 8, sheets 20-23.
7. F.P. Polynin, "Boevyye marshruty" [Combat Routes], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1970, p 302, 310.
8. TsAMO, folio 237, inv. 2757, file 1, sheets 54-55.
9. Ibid., inv. 2727, file 12, sheet 9.
10. M.Kh. Kalashnik, "Ispytaniye ognem" [Trial by Fire], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1978, p 440.
11. TsAMO, folio 237, inv. 2757, file 79, sheets 90-95, 104-117; M.Kh. Kalashnik, Op. cit., p 282.
12. TsAMO, folio 500, inv. 12484, files 994-1009 (maps).
13. See: K.K. Rokossovskiy, "Soldatskiy dolg" [A Soldier's Duty], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1984, pp 248-249.
14. TsAMO, folio 237, inv. 2757, file 71, sheet 7.
15. Ibid. inv. 2473, file 8, sheet 20-23, 45-50; folio 402, inv. 9611, file 23, sheets 106, 148; folio 418, inv. 10736, file 23, sheets 58-59, 63-64; folio 427, inv. 11143, file 26, sheets 8, 10.
16. Ibid., folio 237, inv. 2757, file 71, sheet 5; file 81, sheets 8-10.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal", 1988.

10272

Cooperation of Ground Troops with Attack Air Formations

00010034g Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press 24 Feb 88) pp 49-54

[Article by Maj Gen Avn (Res) V.A. Kumakov, Hero of the Soviet Union, professor; Lt Col V.M. Zaretskiy, candidate of historical sciences: "Cooperation of Ground Troops with Attack Air Formations"; the article was written from the experience of the Great Patriotic War]

[Text] During the years of the Great Patriotic War, particular attention was given to organizing a dependable and ongoing cooperation between the attack aviation and the ground troops. This was explained by the fact that the attack pilots carried out almost 80 percent

of the aircraft sorties in the aim of destroying and neutralizing objectives located up to 10 km behind the front line, that is, that operated chiefly in the same zone as the ground weapons. In order that the ground troops could effectively utilize the results of the ground air strikes, it was essential to clearly organize their joint actions. The current article examines certain questions in the organizing and implementing of tactical cooperation between the ground forces large units (formations) and the attack air formations (units) in breaching the tactical zone of the enemy defenses as well as the main directions of improving this in the course of the Great Patriotic War.

In the first period cooperation was organized on the basis of views which had come being in the prewar years. With the outbreak of the war and up until May 1942, the attack air regiments were part of the combined-arms armies and subordinate to their commanders. Seemingly there was every opportunity to organize tactical collaboration. However, a number of objective and subjective factors prevented this. One of these was the fact that the command and the staffs did not have practical experience in organizing cooperation. The situation was exacerbated by the lack of dependable communications between the staffs and the absence the clear designating of the front line, and by the great distance of the control points from the forward edge.

According to the 1939 Regulation on the Field Service of Soviet Army Staffs, the organization of cooperation was a function of the combined arms staff. In his plans an army commander set the tasks for the ground troops and for the aviation for each day of the operation while the operations and air section of the staff coordinated their execution in terms of place and time. The commander of the army air force, on the basis of the set tasks, took his decisions while his staff planned the combat operations of the air units and was concerned with organizing cooperation. Yet it was not always possible to plan the combat actions considering all the particular features of the situation, as the preparations for them, as a rule, were carried out under conditions of an acute shortage of time. For this reason, cooperation was organized in a general form and for a brief period. Special plans were not drawn up and the individual questions were reflected in the orders, battle instructions and other documents.

At times the staffs were unable to provide the commanders with the required data and operational-tactical calculations before the adopting of a plan. Because of the low capacity of the telegraph and wire facilities employed for communications, the information from the combined-arms command was late in arriving and the duration of passing the commands from the staff of the army air forces to the air formations and units was up to 8 and sometimes 10 hours.(1) Thus, considering the time it took to ready the attack planes for a combat sortie, the requests from the ground troop command often could be carried out only on the following day.

Of importance was the fact that the control points of the troops and the aviation were deployed far from the forward edge and from one another. For example, in January 1942, the Air Force Headquarters of the 6th Army of the Southwestern Front was located an airfield positioned 50 km from its staff. As a result, even with radio communications, the required information and combat data were late in reaching the aviation.(2) The remoteness of the control points also impeded the personal contact between commanders and because of this, the aviators had a poor knowledge of the details of the ground situation. For this reason, when the attack planes operated against the forward edge of the enemy defenses, the danger arose of attacking our own positions. The situation was aggravated by the unreliable designating of the front line by our troops as this was done using special tarps laid out in the first echelon units. However, the tarps were quickly worn out or lost. Radio communication was virtually not employed. Under such conditions the attack planes endeavored to operate farther from the forward edge. This led to a situation where the supported troops were unable to fully utilize the results of the attack aviation strikes.

The difficulties related to logistic support also were felt on the organization and realization of cooperation. In line with the shortage of the essential material and ammunition at the airfields, the combat loading of the aircraft involved in the supporting of the troops did not always correspond to the nature of the set tasks and the objectives of operations. There were instances when the attack planes had no possibility of carrying out the mission. For example, units of the 19th Composite Air Division of the Western Front Air Forces, during the period of 21 October through 2 November 1941 did not carry out a single aircraft sortie due to the lack of fuel and ammunition at the base airfields.(3)

For eliminating the existing shortcomings and for improving tactical cooperation, it was essential to sharply reduce the time of handling request for the employment of the attack aircraft, as well as improve the organizing of the marking of the front line, mutual identification and target designation. For this reason, the combined-arms staffs began receiving air representatives or liaison officers who were entrusted with the following duties: supervising the marking of the forward edge and the presence of the equipment in the troops for this, the collection and forwarding to the air command of data concerning the ground and air situation, information from the combined-arms commanders concerning their aviation, and leadership over the work of the checkpoints.(4) General leadership over the liaison officers was provided by a representative from the operations section of the army air force's headquarters and who was located at the army staff. Through him the attack aviation was given missions and he also received information about the results of operations. Thus, it was possible to somewhat improve the contact between the combined-arms and air commands and shorten the handling time of the requests for employing attack aircraft down to 2-4 hours.

The air representatives in the troops conducted exercises on studying the silhouettes of Soviet and enemy aircraft, they trained the personnel of special teams in sending the pilots identification and target designation signals, and when necessary consulted with the combined-arms commanders on the questions of employing aviation. As a result, the actions of the attack air units began to have a more effective nature and influence more actively the general course of combat and the operation.

During the second period of the war, the further improvement in cooperation was largely influenced by the following: the acquired experience, the establishing of large attack air formations (divisions and corps), the increased firepower of the ground troops, qualitative changes and quantitative growth of communications equipment. Combat operations showed that the commander should be personally concerned with the organizing of cooperation. This notion was reinforced in the 1942 Regulation on The Field Service of Soviet Army Staffs.

In breaching the tactical zone of the enemy defenses, cooperation between the combined-arms formations and attack aviation ones was organized not only by the army commanders but also by the front commanders. The higher level, in comparison with the first period of the war, was caused by changes in the organization and establishment of the front aviation. From May 1942, the attack aviation was part of the air armies of the front. The commander not only gave the tasks to the front's troops and to the aviation, but also set the cooperation procedures. His staff prepared data for the adopting of a plan and then worked out the necessary documentation (the cooperation and liaison plans, the identification tables, target designation and so forth). The adopted plan was a guide for the inferior levels. In using it, the commanders of the attack air divisions in their plans set out the appropriate measures. Their staffs coordinated in detail the procedure for joint operations with the commanders and staffs of the combined-arms formations.

The tactical cooperation of the field forces (formations) of the ground troops with attack air formations (units) assumed more advanced forms in line with the introduction of the air offensive which included the air softening up for the assault and air support for the troops. From the summer of 1943, this began to be planned and carried out to the entire depth of the offensive operation. Cooperation here was organized by the command of the combined-arms armies and attack air corps (divisions). For example, the cooperation plan for the Southern Front armies with the 8th Air Army in the Mius Operation (17 July-2 August 1943) was worked out by their staffs together with representatives of the attack aviation divisions.(5) This made it possible to plan in detail the air support for the troops to the entire depth of the tactical zone of the enemy defenses and allocate the flying time in such a manner that support was provided continuously.

Depending upon the situation, cooperation began to be organized according to variations considering the possible actions of the Nazi and our own troops and the meteorological conditions.(6) In coordinating the various questions, the staff representatives set: the objectives to be hit and composition of the attack air strike groups; the time of the strikes and sectors for overflying the front line; the procedure for neutralizing the enemy air defenses by the ground forces; the procedure for contact between the aircraft and the supported troops by stages of combat; the procedure for giving reciprocal identification and target designation signals. At the same time, they clarified the points for setting up the control points as well as the approximate time and directions of their movement.

The results of the planning were reflected in a unified target map, in the planning tables and the cooperation plan. On a target map, as a rule, with a scale of 1:100,000 they plotted a standard numbering for everyone of the characteristic landmarks and important objects. The planning tables analyzed the questions of tactical cooperation between the combined-arms (tank) armies and attack air formations in terms of the stages of the operations, the tasks of the ground troops and other provisions. The cooperation plans for mobile groups of the front and armies set out the procedure for calling in the attack planes and performing specific measure to support to combat operations (the search for and equipping of landing strips and airfields in the operational depth of the enemy defenses, the establishing of special reserves of fuel and ammunition). The plan for cooperation of the aviation with artillery set out: the sequence for launching attacks the same targets; the areas and time that attack air units would fly over the front line; the time for halting artillery fire or restricting its types, range and direction, the procedure for reciprocal target designation.

Detailed planning for cooperation with the field forces (formations) of the ground troops made it possible to shorten the length of time required to ready the attack air units to take off by permitting the flight personnel to make a preliminary study of the area of the forthcoming operations, the nature of the targets, the reciprocal identification and target designation signals. This increased the efficiency of satisfying the requests from the combined-arms command by the attack planes. By the end of 1943, the attack aviation subunits and units began to reach the target within 60-90 minutes from the moment of their call-in.(7) This time was allocated in the following manner: 3 minutes for receiving the task by the air representative; 5 minutes for coding it according to the procedure chart and map; 5-10 minutes for transmission over the communications equipment; 10 minutes for a study of the task at the staff of the attack air formations; 20 minutes in immediate preparations of the assigned subunits to take off (laying out the route and instructions to the crews); 15 minutes for the starting up, taxiing and take off of six Il-2.(8)

The better organization of communications and the bringing of the base airfields closer to the front line helped to further increase the effectiveness of operations by the attack air formations (units) in the interests of the ground troops. The problem of ensuring prompt strikes by the attack planes against objectives located on the forward edge of the enemy defenses was also resolved by retargeting groups of aircraft in the air to carrying out newly arising tasks. This became possible due to the improved organization of mutual recognition of ground troops and attack plane crews as well as due to the increased stability of air communications. Advanced radios appeared at the control points and on the aircraft and these were marked by greater reliability and better quality communications. In addition to tarps the troops marked the forward edge using pyrotechnic devices (rocket and smoke).

The improved communications and acquired experience made it possible to improve the control of the attack air formations (units) in the course of carrying out battle tasks. The guidance of the aircraft (groups) to ground objectives, retargeting and the calling in of attack planes began to be done by the aviation representatives. As a rule, they were the deputy commanders and chiefs of staff of the attack air formations. Also assigned to aid them were staff officers from the air divisions and air controllers. Thus, gradually in the combined-arms (tank) field forces (formations) operations groups began to represent the attack aviation. Each of these numbered 6-8 men, it had its own communications and was involved in organizing and exercising cooperation of the attack planes with the ground troops. The operations groups set up their own control points on the main axes of ground troop operations in immediate proximity to the forward command posts (PKP) of the combined-arms commanders. During the most crucial moments the commanders of the attack air formations with their operations groups were at the auxiliary or observation post of the supported field forces. They informed the pilots of the situation and directly led their actions.

In the third period of the war the combined-arms and air commanders and staffs did not limit themselves to merely the joint planning of combat. Cooperation was worked out and adjusted in the field or in a mock-up as well as in the course of joint command-staff exercises using maps. For example, in preparing for the offensive on the Iasi axis, the commander of the 37th Army, Lt Gen M.N. Sharokhin, on 10 August 1944, using a mock-up, played through possible versions of troops and air actions and this involved the commander of the IX Composite Air Corps.(9) Some 4 days prior to the start of the offensive by the Third Belorussian Front (commander, Army Gen I.D. Chernyakhovskiy) on the Gumbinnen axis, at the staffs of the 11th Guards and 5th Armies, on 12 October 1944, exercises were conducted with a mock-up for the commanders of the air divisions, regiments and the group leaders in the 1st Air Army on the subject "Operations of attack and bomber aviation in cooperation with the ground troops in the forthcoming

operation." On the following days the commanders organized a fly-over of the combat area by the leaders of the attack groups with bombing against the forward edge of the enemy defenses.(10)

Thorough preparation of the personnel and the careful elaboration of the questions of joint actions made it possible for the attack planes to support the advancing troops by the method direct escorting combining the echeloned actions of small groups with small groups with concentrated strikes by the forces of regiments, divisions and even corps. Concentrated strikes were launched sporadically while echeloned actions were conducted continuously. Groups of 8-10 Il-2 each, in relieving one another over the battlefield, upon ground commands neutralized the enemy artillery, tanks and centers of resistance.(11) For carrying out newly arising tasks, the commanders of the attack air formations would assign up to 25 percent of their forces and this made it possible to carry out requests from the ground troops immediately.(12)

Cooperation was organized and carried out on the basis two basic principles: direct air support for the ground troops and the putting of the attack air formations under operational subordination to the commanders of the combined-arms (tank) armies. The former was employed more frequently while the latter was used only in individual stages of the operations. For example, for supporting the troops during the crossing of the Oder, the Commander of the Second Belorussian Front, MSU K.K. Rokossovskiy, on 14 April 1945, put an attack air division from the 4th Air Army under operational subordination to the 65th Army (commander, Col Gen P.I. Batov). In taking the crossing such a decision, he proceeded from the view that the fire capabilities of the army artillery to neutralize the enemy defenses would be substantially limited until the artillery had moved to the left bank of the river.(13)

Thus, the experience of the Great Patriotic War showed that the organization and realization of cooperation between the ground troop field forces (formations) and the attack air formations were continuously improved. Particular attention was given to increasing the effective operations of the attack planes and to their effective employment for destroying all objectives on the battlefield which at a given moment directly prevented the advance of the ground troops. It was possible to resolve these and other problems by: detailed planning and careful joint preparation of all the forces for the operation; by improving the means and organization of communications; by prompt and effective control of the aircraft from the command posts of the air and combined-arms commanders located in direct proximity to one another; by the employing an extensive network of air controllers in the troops; by the rational allocation of targets between all weapons; by the significant increase in the number of Il-2 aircraft and by the better organization and establishment of the attack air formations

(units); by the development of the combat method of attack aviation; by the use acquired experience and by the increased skill of the personnel.

The continuous cooperation of the attack planes with the ground troops was ensured by: optimum allocation of the forces by days of the operation, the presence of a reserve in the hands of the front (army) commander, constant air and ground alert for the attack air subunits and the prompt relocating of the attack air units behind the advancing troops. As a result, there was a substantial rise in the effectiveness of air support. Due to this as well as to the action of other factors, the average breakthrough rate for the tactical zone of the enemy defenses increased from 2-4 km per day during the first period of the war up to 10-15 km a day in the third, that is, by 4 or 5 fold.(14) The experience gained in solving the questions of organizing and providing cooperation is of lasting importance. Much of what was worked out and actually realized in the war years under present-day conditions has assumed particular value for the combat training of the troops, regardless of the fundamental changes in the ways and means of armed combat.

Footnotes

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 346, inv. 5755, file 5, sheet 82.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., file 23, sheet 7.
4. Ibid., sheet 252.
5. Ibid., file 89, sheet 15.
6. Ibid., file 42, sheet 33.
7. Ibid., folio 290, inv. 3284, file 321, sheet 2.
8. Ibid., folio 346, inv. 5755, file 94, sheets 14-26.
9. See: "Armeyskiye operatsii" [Army Operations], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1977, pp 24, 25.
10. TsAMO, folio 290, inv. 3284, file 469, sheet 99.
11. Ibid., folio 327, inv. 4190, file 111, sheets 55-57.
12. *Informatsionny sbornik*, Moscow, Voenizdat, No 24, 1945, p 63.
13. See: "Armeyskiye operatsii," p 29.
14. TsAMO, folio 346, inv. 5755, file 26, sheet 48; file 49, sheets 25, 29.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal", 1988.

10272

Partisan Raids

00010034h Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press
24 Feb 88) pp 55-62

[Article by Col A.S. Knyazkov, candidate of historical
sciences: "Partisan Raids"]

[Text] The Soviet partisans during the years of the Great Patriotic War employed various forms to fight against the Nazi invaders. One such form was raids which were an aggregate of battles, sabotage-reconnaissance and mass political activities. During the various stages of the war, the tasks of the partisan formations leaving for raids varied. In 1941-1942, these consisted in developing a partisan movement in new areas and establishing contact with local detachments. A typical example of this was the raid by a group of partisan detachments under the command of V.Z. Korzh in March 1942. This group fought its way through six rayons of Minsk Oblast, it attacked the enemy traffic control services and police sections, it disrupted communications and carried mass political work among the population. In the course of the raid the Minsk Party Obkom established direct contact with those underground raykoms, party organizations and groups contact with which had been maintained solely through liaison workers. "The first raid through Belorussia," wrote the raid's organizer, the secretary of the Minsk Party Obkom, V.I. Kozlov, in his memoirs, "was of enormous benefit. It strengthened ties with the masses, it raised the authority of the partisan movement and almost doubled the number of fighters." (1)

Similar tasks were carried out in the summer of 1942 by the 1st and 4th partisan brigades of Leningrad Oblast and the Latvian Partisan Regiment "For Soviet Latvia" which raided from the Leningrad partisan area to the boundaries of Latvia, by the partisan corps (commander, V.V. Razumov, commissar A.I. Shtrakhov) operating in the territory of Kalinin Oblast in the autumn of 1942, as well as by many other partisan formations.

As a whole, the partisan raids during the first period of the war were not mass actions. The tactics was just being worked out in them. The actions were conducted basically to a shallow depth and by limited forces and frequently were aimed at bringing the detachments out from under the punitive strikes.

The going over of the Soviet Army from the strategic defensive to the offensive in the second period of the war, the nation-wide scope of the partisan struggle, the equipping of the partisan formations with their own radio centers and modern demolition devices as well as the acquired combat experience made it possible to direct the efforts of the raiding partisan formations to carrying out broader tasks.

From the end of 1942, the raids were conducted basically by large partisan forces and they more often involved several partisan formations (detachments). The decision

to conduct the raids was taken by the leading levels of the partisan movement and only in exceptional instances independently. During the second and third periods of the war, more than 40 raids involving over 100 large partisan formations were carried out upon the assignment of the partisan movement staffs. (2) At the same time the depth of the raids was increased. The partisans traveled hundreds and thousands of kilometers from their base areas and most often abandoned them permanently.

In the spring of 1943, when Hq SHC was working out the plan for the summer-autumn campaign and set the southwestern sector as the main one, the raiding units and formations were given the task of reconnoitering the presence and condition of the enemy defensive lines along the western banks of the Oskol, Severniy Donets, Desna and Dnieper, to ascertain the forces and the nature of the fortifications around Poltava, Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhye, Kremenchug, Kiev, Chernigov, Zhmerinka, Nikolayev and Odessa as well as test the condition of certain fortified areas along the western frontier. At the same time particular tasks were also given. Thus, the formation of S.A. Kovpak was ordered: "...a) to come out into Chernovtsy Oblast for fighting on the enemy lines of communications there..., "(3) and the partisan formation of Ya.I. Melnik was to "come out in Vinnitsa Oblast for systematically operating on the lines of communications leading to the railroad junctions of Zhmerinka, Kazatin." (4) The formation of M.I. Naumov was to pass through the southern steppe portion Zhitomir and Kiev Oblasts, the northern portion of Kirovograd Oblast, to establish contact with the partisan detachments operating there, to carry out sabotage on the Fastov-Znamenka railroad, to disrupt navigation on the Dnieper and establish new partisan detachments in the area of Chigirin-Smela-Znamenka. (5) A majority of these tasks was carried out.

The formation of S.A. Kovpak set out on a raid into the Carpathian area on 12 June 1943 from Gomel Oblast with 130 machine guns, 380 submachine guns, 9 cannons, 30 mortars, rifles and other weapons. The march was difficult. They had to fight not only the Nazi units but also bands of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists. The formation fought its way across the territory of 13 oblasts of Belorussian and the Ukraine, it crossed the Dniester, Goryn and Stuch rivers, it cut scores of strongly defended highways and railroads and in the second half of July 1943 reached the frontier with Hungary. They partisans destroyed and wounded over 3,800 Nazi soldiers and officers, they derailed 19 military trains, they blew up and burned down 52 highway and railroad bridges, 51 dumps, they put out of operation 3 power plants, 20 communications centers, 198 of telephone and telegraph lines, they set afire many oil rigs and 3 oil storage farms, they defeated several enemy garrisons billeted in population points, and liberated hundreds of Soviet patriots from the Nazi torture chambers. (6) The Carpathian raid by the formation of S.A. Kovpak substantially influenced the development of fighting in the enemy rear in the western oblasts of the Ukraine.

In 1944, the raiding partisan formations cooperated closely on the operational level with the advancing troops. Some of them which possessed the greatest combat experience conducted successful raids outside our motherland, having provided fraternal aid to the peoples of Poland and Czechoslovakia.

Each raid required careful preparation. The staffs of the partisan movement in setting the battle tasks for the raid for the formations (detachments), usually indicated the forces to be involved, the goal of the raid, the approximate direction of movement, the starting and end points of the route, the time on the move and tasks in the new area.(7)

The formation (detachment) staff studied the received task, it drew up a plan for the raid, it split the entire route into daily moves, set the places for halts and rests, it thought through the march formation, organized control and communications, the measures for logistic and political support, security on the march and during the halts, antitank and air defense protection, and coordinated the actions of the partisan detachments (subunits) in terms of place, time and goal between themselves and with the aviation, and if it had been assigned for supporting a formation, also with the local partisan detachments through whose combat areas their route moved. With a group raid the questions of cooperation were worked out with the adjacent formations (detachments) which usually traveled along parallel routes.

Particular attention was paid to careful reconnaissance of the route and to the objectives of the forthcoming actions. The collection of information about the enemy was provided by the effective operation of partisan intelligence. The essential intelligence data were also received by the partisans from the partisan movement staff to which they were subordinate. An important role was assigned to early troop reconnaissance. Thus, the command of the 208th Partisan Regiment (commander N.Ye. Bespoyasov, commissar R.I. Shcherbakov), in preparing at the beginning of December 1943, to move from Klichevskiy Rayon of Mogilev Oblast into Gravevskiy Rayon of Belostok Oblast, with the aid of regimental reconnaissance (commander of the reconnaissance platoon P.T. Terekhov) carefully checked the entire route, and ascertained the situation on the line of march. Some 5 days before the regiment left for the raid, P.T. Terekhov sent to the staff three reports with information on the position of the enemy garrisons, their size, weapons, combat capability and morale. In these he described in detail the lines of communications and provided information on just how much they were used and recommended places for halts and rests. The reconnaissance established contact with partisan detachments and brigades located along the route of the regiment and agreed their command about combat cooperation.(8)

Preparations for a raid were usually carried out on the territory of a partisan area. The detachments accumulated weapons and ammunition and prepared transport.

The personnel was intensely engaged in combat training. In the exercises they worked out such questions as "The March and Meeting Engagement," "Disengagement," "Crossing of Water Obstacles," "Crossing Railroads and Highways Used Intensely by the Nazis" and others. The partisans studied weapons and demolition and the rules of conspiracy and learned to orient themselves in the terrain and follow a compass.(9)

All the preparatory measures were carried out covertly. The command was particularly concerned for maintaining the secrecy of the goal, the times and route of the raid, the size of the detachments and their weapons. For this purpose, measures were carried out to disinform the enemy: false rumors were spread, route reconnaissance was sent out in false directions and so forth. Thus, the command of one of the partisan brigades (commander A.V. Romanov, commissar P.A. Masherov), in preparing in the summer of 1943 for a raid from Vitebsk Oblast into the area of the town of Vileyka, issued a false order to relocate the brigade into Sirotinskiy Rayon of Vitebsk Oblast but the date for the move was not given. On the false route from time to time a feint sweep was made (the preparations for the raid took around 2 months), while the planned route of march was studied with the aid of adjacent partisan formations.(10)

The specific actions of the partisans deep in the enemy rear with constantly exposed flanks did not allow routine in forming up the march formation of the unit. Usually a reconnaissance subunit move ahead of the column and behind it came the main forces and the security subunits. It was important that the march formation of the partisan forces provide ease of control, quickness of movement and deployment, dependable defense against surprise enemy strikes and particularly from the flanks and rear.

Thus, there was the following march formation of the partisan formation of A.F. Fedorov (6 detachments, a mortar battery, a cavalry group, medical unit and other combat and special subunits totalling over 1,500 men)(11) and which in March-June 1943 moved from around Chernigov to the Kovel area. Ahead on the flanks and in the rear at a distance of 25 km and more from the column of the main forces were the reconnaissance and sabotage groups. The movement of the column was headed by advance march security (a company), behind it moved the vanguard and at a distance of 4-6 km from it followed the main forces. Flanking march security (1 or 2 platoons) sent out from each detachment protected the column against possible Nazi flank attacks. The rear march security (a company) covered the column from the rear. The medical unit and transport moved at the center of the column. The cavalry group and mortar battery marched at the head of the main forces and in the event of a surprise appearance of the enemy by active operations together with the security ensured the organized entry into battle by the formation or allowed in an opportunity to maneuver in the aim of outflanking the enemy and coming out in its rear.

The location of the staff on a march was determined by the situation. Usually the commander and the commissar traveled ahead of the column of the main forces, while the chief of staff was with the advance march security. The command and staff of the formation provided control by radio, as well as with the use of messengers, using sound and light signals as well as "beacons" which were set out on the road intersections.

The tasks for the detachments were set for the immediate move, usually a day ahead, proceeding from the overall plan and specific situation. The end goal of a raid was kept a secret.

The marches were made predominantly at night. During the day the partisans rested in the woods or remote population points and conducted reconnaissance in depth. During the halts the detachments spread out and took up an all-round defense. A third of the available forces was assigned to the reserve in the event of repelling an enemy surprise attack. Particular attention was paid to the observance of secrecy, discipline and the accurate execution of orders.

Until the main task of the raid had been carried out, the main forces endeavored not to be involved in extended fighting and moved, observing all precautionary measures, using remote paths and roads known only to local residents. The small enemy garrisons encountered on the route were destroyed. Numerous reconnaissance and sabotage operated away from the main route of the formation, sometimes at a significant distance, diverting the enemy's attention from the column of main forces. Such tactics proved effective. The enemy suffered heavy losses while the main raiding forces of the partisans remained unapprehended.

In the course of the raids the partisans frequently had to cross strongly defended land and water lines of communications. This involved great difficulties and required definite skill. Special assault groups captured a section of the road planned for the crossing, and it ensured the crossing of it by the column of main forces. On the flanks all the routes were mined, ambushes were set out and various diversionary measures were also undertaken. The partisans crossed rivers on improvised equipment, boats, rafts or crossings captured from the enemy as well as by fording. Here they acted by surprise and decisively, showing boldness. Thus, in approaching the Dnieper, the reconnaissance sent ahead from the formation of A.N. Saburov which in the autumn of 1942 was conducting a raid from the Bryansk forests into the Right-Bank Ukraine, established that at the points along the bank there was no equipment for crossing and there was a ferry in Loyev, but only on the opposite bank. The size of the city garrison, according to the data of the reconnaissance force, was around 200 men.

Having received this information, the formation's command decided to undertake a bold maneuver. Up to now the formation had been moving to the north. The enemy

which had constantly followed the actions of the partisans was under the impression that they were moving toward Gomel. The Nazis began to quickly move up forces toward it, reducing the garrisons at other population points. The Loyev garrison had also been sharply reduced. The partisans suddenly turned south, thereby confounding all the enemy's plans, and during the night of 7 November, reached the Dnieper opposite Loyev.

A reinforced company of submachine guns secretly crossed the river immediately. Making a surprise nighttime raid, the bold troops captured the Loyev commandant's office and seized the crossing. The remnants of the garrison, not knowing what forces the attackers possessed, fled in panic. Soon reinforcements were delivered to the partisans on the raft. The remnants of the Nazis were completely eliminated in the town.

Having learned that the partisans had taken Loyev, the Nazi Command moved up reserves and began an offensive, intending to drown the partisans in the Dnieper.

At the same time that the people's avengers in the town were fighting the Nazis besieging them, across the Dnieper to the south of Loyev, upon order of A.N. Saburov, the 8th Battalion under the command of P.V. Reva crossed on boats. It captured the village of Radul in Chernigov Oblast and, having made an outflanking march, made a surprise attack from the rear against the enemy attacking Loyev. Ending up in a fire pocket, the Nazis retreated in disorder. In the fighting of 8 and 9 November, the partisans destroyed 130 Nazis and wounded 75, and annihilated 5 armored vehicles, 12 trucks and 2 cars. (12) The route for the partisan formations to the right bank of the Dnieper lay open. Regardless of camouflaging the partisans were not always able to avoid clashes against superior enemy forces. Surprised by the appearance of the raiding detachments in a new area, the Nazis endeavored to surround and destroy them. In coming into combat contact with the punitive troops, the partisans tried to take cover behind the march security, to wait until darkness, and having changed direction, to quickly disengage from the pursuers. If this maneuver did not succeed, then a breakout was prepared.

Having studied the enemy grouping, the partisans attacked the weakest point and broke out the encirclement. The breakthrough was organized, as a rule, at night or at dawn, when the enemy's vigilance had been dulled. They also practiced the method of the covert infiltration of the enemy battle formations. The partisans reassembled at a previously designated assembly area upon the order of the command in small groups, each of which, in carrying out the overall plan, operated independently on the designated route. There they were reunited as a formation or detachment. Such a maneuver, for example, was undertaken by the partisan formation of S.A. Kovpak when it was surrounded by superior forces of regular Nazi troops in the Carpathians. (13)

Raids by large formations were a characteristic feature of the Soviet partisan movement during the years of the Great Patriotic War. In alternating movement with fighting, in maneuvering over extensive territory, and appearing in the most unexpected places for the enemy, the partisans caused its great losses. Experience showed that most suitable for the conduct of raids was medium-rugged terrain with forested areas as this provided an opportunity to maneuver with places for taking shelter and rest. Small mobile detachments and reconnaissance-sabotage groups could operate successfully in the steppe and on plains terrain as well as under the conditions of a dense network of communications.(14) Large partisan formations also operated here for a short time in order to carry out assignments of the command. For example, the formation under the command of M.I. Naumov operated in this manner.

Upon the assignment of the Ukrainian Partisan Movement's Staff, this left on 1 February 1943 for a raid from the Khinel Forest to destroy the enemy lines of communications on the territory of Sumy, Kharkov and Poltava Oblasts and which were being intensely used by the Nazis at this time. The seven detachments of the formation left for the raid on sleds and horses, crossing 50-80 km a day during the long winter nights. The enemy was unable to concentrate sufficient forces around the formation to defeat it. Moreover, the snow-covered fields and copses deprived the enemy of superiority in maneuvering. The partisans quickly crossed the southern unforrested rayons of Sumy Oblast, and blew up five railroad bridges on the Sumy—Kharkov, Sumy—Gotnya and Sumy—Lyubotin mainlines.(15) By mid February the formation had almost doubled in size from the indigenous population.

The further raiding by the formation was carried out under more difficult conditions. After the crossing of the Dnieper, the partisans for several days were waiting for the arrival of freight from the Soviet rear. Even an insignificant delay in movement made it possible for the enemy to put together a strong punitive detachment. The formation had to fight its way forward. Only the arrival on 6 April 1943 in the extensive partisan area in the north of the Ukraine saved the formation from defeat. During the time of this heroic raid, the partisans had crossed 18 rivers, cut 15 operating railroads and conducted 47 battles as a result of which around 3,000 Nazi soldiers and officers were put out of commission. The partisan operations showed the effectiveness of raid tactics in the steppe areas under the conditions of continuous movement, as well as the great importance of the partisan areas as bases for rest, treatment of sick and wounded, the reconstituting and resupplying of the raiding formations with ammunition.(16)

Characteristically in adhering to the developed tactics on the raids, the partisan formations suffered much fewer losses than the enemy. An example would be the so-called Neman raid of the 1st Ukrainian Partisan Division under the command of P.P. Vershigora and carried

out by it upon assignment of Hq SHC. In the summer of 1944, in cooperating in the frontline zone with the First Ukrainian, First and Third Belorussian and Second Baltic Fronts, the formation (three regiments and seven squadrons with a total of 2,000 men) covered more than 1,100 km across the territory of Pinsk, Baranovichi, Grodno, Belostok and Brest Oblasts, it crossed five times the Neman, the Berezina, Shchara, Svisloch and Dnieper-Bug Canal, and twice fought its way across the Moscow—Warsaw Highway which the Nazis had turned into a true defensive position with mined embankments toward the forests, pillboxes and armored cupolas on the highway with coordinated fire. The formation conducted 90 battles in the course of which more than 3,000 Nazis were put out of action. In the course of the raid the partisans lost 32 men killed, 64 wounded and 13 missing in action.(17)

The success was achieved due to the skillful leadership of the formation by the command, to the high political and moral state of the partisans, and to the great combat experience gathered by the personnel in previous raids. By this time the formation had developed into a mobile foot-mounted light division. The raid was made under the conditions of an enemy retreat and for this reason the Nazi Command was unable to learn the intentions of the formation and undertake specific measures against it. The raid again showed the advantage of mobile formations in comparison with those tethered to a certain territory.

During the raids the partisans not only engaged in combat but also conducted political work among the population. "You go into a village," S.A. Kovpak taught his subordinates, "you raise the people to fight using everything for this: leaflets, radio and agitators. Arm the local partisans, and teach them your own experience so that tomorrow, when you are far away, the flames of fires will not die out behind you and the roar of explosions will not fall silent."(18) Other partisan raiding formations adhered to these rules. Thus, the personnel of the partisan division under the command of S.F. Malikov (commissar L.G. Bugayenko) during a raid through the western oblasts of the Ukraine in the winter and spring of 1944, held 632 meetings with the local inhabitants and these were attended by more than 35,000 persons, they handed out 50,000 leaflets and newspapers both those distributed the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party (Bolshevik) as well as those published by the formation's printing plant.(19)

Other partisan formations also conducted great political work among the local population during raids. The inhabitants of the towns and villages greeted the partisans joyously, they shared their food and clothing with them, they provided help in reconnaissance, they willingly acted as guides, and volunteered for the partisan detachments and formations. Due to this during the raids the formations doubled and tripled in size.

The raids were the most complicated form of actions by the Soviet partisans during the years of the Great Patriotic War. The raiding formations carried out a large range of military-political tasks: they conducted reconnaissance in depth in the interest of the Soviet Command, they made surprise attacks against important military and economic installations and the enemy lines of communications, they destroyed enemy personnel and military equipment, they strengthened ties with the population and provided international aid to the Resistance Movement in neighboring states.

Partisan tactics in the course of the raid was marked by the art of maneuvering, and by a diversity of methods for fighting the basis of which was creative initiative, strategy, the skillful use of the terrain, careful reconnaissance and close contacts with the population. For this reason the raids involved not everyone but only the best trained partisan formations which had significant combat experience and high morale and led by enterprising and decisive commanders and commissars.

Regardless of the difficult conditions under which the partisans had to operate including long, fatiguing moves, the cold and bad weather, the lack of food and ammunition, and the constant fighting against superior enemy forces, in the course of the raids they caused the enemy substantial losses and diverted significant Nazi forces to secure the rear facilities. With the entry of the raiding formations into new areas, the front of the people's war was gradually widened, it involved constantly new forces and the military-political and economic measures of the occupiers collapsed.

The partisan raiding formations inscribed many glorious pages in the history of the partisan movement during the years of the Great Patriotic War. A study of their tactics is of value not only on the historical cognitive level. The experience of organizing and conducting raids has not lost its importance today. It can be successfully employed by the people's of the dependent countries which are fighting for their national liberation.

Footnotes

1. V.I. Kozlov, "Lyudi osobogo sklada" [A Special Breed of People], Minsk, Belarus, 1973, p 222.

2. "Voyennyy entsiklopedicheskiy slovar" [Military Encyclopedic Dictionary], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1986, p 539.

3. PAIP pri TsK KPU [Party Archives of the Party History Institute under the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party], folio 63, inv. 1, file 1, sheet 44.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. "Sovetskaya Ukraina v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny 1941-1945: Dokumenty i materialy" [The Soviet Ukraine During the Years of the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945: Documents and Materials], Kiev, Naukova Dumka, Vol 2, 1980, p 464.

7. Ibid., Vol 3, p 229.

8. "Vsenarodnaya borba v Belorussii protiv nemetsko-fashistskikh zakhvatchkov v gody Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [The Struggle of All the People in Belorussia Against the Nazi Invaders During the Years of the Great Patriotic War], Minsk, Belarus, Vol 2, 1984, p 326.

9. PAIP pri TsK KPB [Party Archives of the Party History Institute Under the Central Committee of the Belorussian Communist Party], folio 3500, inv. 3, file 119, sheet 358.

10. Ibid., folio 1, inv. 14, file 489, sheet 241.

11. N. V. Starozhilov, "Partizanskiy soyedineniya Ukrainy v Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyne" [Partisan Formations of the Ukraine in the Great Patriotic War], Kiev, Vishcha Shkola, 1983, p 51.

12. Z. A. Bogatyr, "Borba v tylu vruga" [The Fight in the Enemy Rear], Moscow, Mysl, 1969, pp 143-146.

13. "Narodnaya voyna v tylu fashistskikh okupantov na Ukraine 1941-1944" [The People's War in the Rear of the Nazi Occupiers in the Ukraine in 1941-1944], Kiev, Naukova Dumka, Book 2, 1985, p 250.

14. "Sovetskaya Ukraina v gody..., " Vol 3, pp 196-197.

15. "Istoriya vtoroy mirovoy voyne 1939-1945" [History of World War II of 1939-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 6, 1976, p 177.

16. "Narodnaya voyna v tylu..., " Book 2, pp 241-243.

17. *Istoricheskiy arkhiv*, No 3, 1961, pp 103, 106, 107, 108, 116.

18. S.A. Kovpak, "Ot Putivlya do Karpat" [From Putivl to the Carpathians], Kiev, Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1962, p 168.

19. "Sovetskaya Ukraina v gody..., " Vol 3, p 229.

Regiment Offensive Under Winter Conditions
 00010034i Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
 ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press
 24 Feb 88) pp 68-70

[Article, published under the heading "Mastery and Heroism," by Col (Res) I.I. Kartavtsev, candidate of historical sciences: "Regiment Offensive Under Winter Conditions"]

[Text] At the beginning of December 1941, the Nazi troops had undertaken their last desperate attempts to break through to Moscow. But having depleted their offensive capabilities, they began to go over to the defensive.

A characteristic train in the enemy's organization of defenses was the establishing of strongpoints and centers of resistance adapted for an all-round defense. Usually these were set up in population points and road junctions. The spaces between them were covered by machine gun and artillery fire. The strongpoints were defended by garrisons up to a company in strength and centers of resistance up to a battalion.

On 10 December 1941, Maj B.D. Radchenko, commander of the 49th Rifle Regiment which was on the defensive in direct contact with the enemy, received a battle task from Maj Gen N.F. Lebedenko, the commander of the 50th Rifle Division which was part of the 5th Army, to defeat the enemy strongpoint in the settlement of Grigorovo and advance on the axis of Tuteyevo; a portion of the regiment's forces, in continuing to defend the occupied line, was to cover the division's left flank.(1)

The 49th Rifle Division was to advance in a zone about 3 km and to a depth of 10 km. The unit's commander decided to attack the enemy with left-flank battalion and exploit the success with the second battalion which was at the center of the battle formation. The preparing of the unit for the offensive was carried out considering the difficult meteorological conditions (the frosts reached to 25-30 degrees while the snow cover was 35-40 cm deep). This required effective training of the personnel and preparation of the combat equipment. Measures were taken aimed at increasing the cross-country capability of the transport and these included clearing the snowdrifts on the roads and the mounting of the guns and mortars on specially equipped sleds. In addition, riflemen and combat engineer were assigned to help the infantrymen. The regiment's reconnaissance platoon was manned with experienced skiers who had distinguished themselves in previous fighting. Regardless of the difficult weather and bad road conditions, by the morning of 10 December, the unit had received had received 0.7 of a unit of fire of 45-millimeter shells, 0.5 of a unit of fire for 76-millimeter shell as well as 1.2 unit of fire for the 82-millimeter mortar shells.

Prior to the offensive, the regiment's commander conducted a reconnaissance in the field and during this he set the procedure for assaulting the strongpoint in Grigorovo and issued to the battalion commanders the procedure and signals for cooperation with the supporting battalion of the 202nd Artillery Regiment. For combatting low-flying aircraft and covering the subunits from the air enemy, each company was assigned one machine gun crew.

During the period of the preparations for the offensive, effective party political work was conducted in the subunits and aimed at carrying out the task set for the regiment. Meetings were held in all the party and Komsomol organizations. Agitators conducted political information sessions in the platoons. Talks were organized for the new recruits and in the course of these fighters who had participated in battles and who had received orders and medals shared their experience. The assault was set for 0800 hours, but due to the snowstorm which blew up during the night, it was shifted to 1600 hours on 11 December. The fallen snow smoothed out the irregularities and changed the relief and appearance of landmarks. This impeded the detecting of firing positions in the enemy defenses, but on the other hand, improved observance of enemy movements.

After a brief artillery softening up, at the designated hour the 1st Battalion went over to the assault. However, the intense fire from enemy firing positions which had not been neutralized during the artillery softening up halted the advancing troops. In the arising situation, the regiment's commander took a decision to assault the enemy on the defensive in Grigorovo in the flank with the forces of the 2d Battalion but was unable to take this population point. By the end of the day, the regiment had advanced 3 km while a portion of the forces continued fighting for Grigorovo.

An analysis of the conducted fighting showed that the reason for the setback was the poor organization of reconnaissance, the low results of artillery fire, the exposed flanks of the advancing subunits and poorly organized cooperation. Moreover, the artillery observation posts located separately from the command post of the regiment's commander and the KNP [command and observation post] of the battalion commanders, did not provide prompt fire support for advancing rifle subunits.(2)

However, the experience gained in the fighting for Grigorovo made it possible soon thereafter to successfully defeat the enemy which had dug in in the settlement of Sonino. In organizing the offensive, the reconnaissance of the enemy was carried out more carefully and cooperation was better organized. For increasing the effectiveness of artillery fire, at the command post of the regiment's commander there were representatives from

the artillery subunits supporting the regiment's offensive as well as representatives of the regimental artillery who were directly with the battalion and company commanders.

In this fighting the unit's commander, for exploiting the offensive, committed to battle a second echelon which was advancing 200 meters behind the first. There was definite risk here but completely justified. The snowstorm which had started securely protected the battalion from the enemy. The quick committing of the regiment's second echelon was of crucial significance in completing the enemy's defeat. One must also comment on the decisiveness and boldness of the unit's men. Thus, a group of soldier scouts on skis headed by Sgt V. Zalyugin during the night moved close to the enemy's forward trenches. In the darkness they detected a 37-mm cannon. Having destroyed the Nazis in the dugout, the group safely returned to its position. They also brought back the cannon and shells for it and these were subsequently turned against the enemy.(3)

Also very instructive was the fighting of the 1160th Rifle Regiment (commander, Maj I.P. Boyartinov) from the 352d Rifle Division of the 20th Army in January 1942. The regiment (minus one battalion) was on the defensive along the western edge of the woods to the east of Timonino and was preparing for an offensive. The snow cover was a meter deep. Snowstorms each day recovered the roads in the unit's positions.

Three days had been allocated to prepare for the breaching of the enemy defenses. On 7 January, recruits were received by the regiment and training commenced immediately. Simultaneously specially assigned groups conducted reconnaissance of the enemy and the field. The artillery conducted intense registration fire. On 8 January, the commander of the 352d Rifle Division, Col U.M. Prokovyev issued a battle order having given the 1160th Rifle Regiment the following task: "...forming-up place—the western edge of the forest of Timonino to the north of the road running from Timonino to Tishkovo, to advance to the northeast of the outskirts of Timonino and in cooperation with the 1158th Rifle Regiment to attack and destroy the enemy in the northern part of Timonino and subsequently advance on the axis of elev. 221.1 and by the end of the day capture Afanasovo..."(4) On the same day the regiment's commander in the field set and clarified the tasks for the commanders of the battalions, companies and supporting subunits for the offensive and worked out the questions of cooperation between the infantry and artillery. The unit was to advance in a zone of 600 meters and the depth of the task was 10 km. The reconnaissance in force conducted the day before ascertained the actual configuration for the forward edge of the enemy defenses and detected the grouping of enemy forces, the fire plan and obstacles. On the northeastern outskirts there were not two infantry battalions as had been assumed, just one. In the company strongpoints they discovered five dug-in tanks used

as firing positions. It was also established that the Nazis were taking shelter in heated dugouts having set reinforced security.

The regiment was supported by two battalions of 122-mm howitzers and 76-mm cannons. Some 25 percent of all the artillery was to be employed in destroying the enemy by direct laying. Targets were set ahead of time for each gun. In the rifle companies they assigned antitank soldiers. The regimental combat engineers on skis were included in the reconnaissance group and one platoon was assigned as an antitank detachment.

In the morning of 10 January, with the start of the artillery softening up, the first echelon battalions took up the forming-up place and by 1030 hours with the support of the direct laying gun went over to the assault. Each of the two first echelon battalions focused the main effort in outflanking Timonino, respectively, to the north and south, creating a threat of general encirclement. In fearing that our subunits would come out in the rear, the enemy, taking cover under the fire of small submachine gunner groups, began to retreat. The regiment's commander ordered the battalions to exploit the offensive in depth. In seeing the hopelessness of the situation, the enemy retreated to previously prepared positions (3 km to the west of Timonino).

Thus, during a short period of time the regiment's immediate task was carried out: it had destroyed 350 Nazis, an ammunition dump, and 3 antiaircraft cannons and 4 mortars had been captured. It was not possible to continue the offensive without a pause due to the deep snow. The day before the start of it, a snowstorm had raged for an entire day and this fettered the movement of the troops for an entire week. Without tanks the rifle units were unable to carry out pursuit. As a result, the average rate of advance for the regiment from 10 through 15 January 1942, was not more than 2 km. The battle task for a depth of two enemy positions was carried out in 6 days.

The experience of the fighting in 1941-1942 was well studied. An improvement in the tactics of offensive combat under winter conditions subsequently was carried out by reinforcing the rifle units with combat equipment having good cross-country capability. For example, in January 1943, the 176th Regiment of the 46th Rifle Division reinforced by 2 tanks, 21 SAU-76, an artillery regiment with 24 76-mm guns and 3 combat engineer companies(5), was fighting in East Prussia. The overall fire capability of the reinforcements surpassed by several fold the fire capability of the rifle regiment itself. Moreover, due to the good cross-country capability it was possible to exclude the falling behind of the tanks and SAU from the attacking subunits. As a result, the 176th Rifle Regiment under difficult winter conditions (ice, wet snow and snowdrifts on the roads) successfully carried out the set battle task.

Footnotes

1. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 906, inv. 11598, file 1, sheet 72.
2. Ibid., sheet 74.
3. Ibid., folio 50ad, inv. 203438, file 3, sheet 155.
4. Ibid., folio 352, inv. 1410, file 1, sheet 1.
5. "Strelkovyye podrazdeleniya i polk v razlichnykh vidakh boya: Sbornik takticheskikh primerov iz opyta Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny" [Rifle Subunits and the Regiment in Various Types of Combat: Collection of Tactical Examples from the Experience of the Great Patriotic War], Moscow, Voenizdat, 1957, p 25.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal", 1988.

10272

2d Assault Army in Combat for the Motherland
00010034j Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press
24 Feb 88) pp 71-77

[Article published under the heading "Veterans Recall," by Army Gen N.G. Lyashchenko: "The 2d Assault Army in Battles for the Motherland"; from November 1942, Col N.G. Lyashchenko served in the 2d Assault Army in the positions of deputy commander of the 18th Rifle Division, the commander of the 73rd Separate Naval Brigade and then 90th Rifle Division. At present he heads the Army Veterans Council]

[Text] The combat activities of the 2d Assault Army in the Great Patriotic War commenced on the Volkhov Front.(1) During the first days of January 1942, its formations were deployed along the eastern bank of the Volkhov River on the line of Krupichino, Russa. The assault grouping was concentrated on the axis of Selishche, Spasskaya Polist. To the right were the troops of the 59th Army of Maj Gen I.V. Galanin and to the left the 52d Army of Lt Gen V.F. Yakovlev.

The Lyuban Offensive Operation (7 January-30 April 1942) which involved the 2d Assault Army commenced unsuccessfully. In going over to the offensive on 7 January, the troops of the Volkhov Front were unsuccessful. Encountering strong machine gun and mortar fire, our units were forced to retreat to the initial lines. The fighting showed the unsatisfactory training of the troops and staffs: command was not organized, there was a lack of cooperation and there was also not enough artillery and ammunition. The assault commenced out of time and in an unorganized manner. Because of this Hq SHC put off the offensive.

On 13 January 1942, the front's offensive was resumed. By the end of the following day the assault grouping of the 2d Assault Army (commander, Lt Gen N.K. Klykov(2)), having crossed the Volkhov, had captured a number of population points on the opposite bank. The greatest success had been achieved by the 327th Rifle Division of Col I.M. Antyufeyev which, having driven the subunits of the enemy 126th Infantry Division from the population points of Bor and Krasnyy Poselok, captured an enemy fortified position in this sector. The 58th Rifle Brigade of Col F.M. Zhiltsov also fought successfully, having liberated Yamno. For exploiting the success, the army commander, Lt Gen N.K. Klykov from the morning of 15 January committed the second echelon to battle. This intensified the offensive actions, although it was not possible to completely shatter the Nazi resistance. As the army advanced, it encountered ever-growing resistance from the enemy and suffered heavy casualties.

By 21 January, the 2d Assault Army had reached the main zone of the enemy defenses in the sector of Spasskaya Polist, Myasnoy Bor, lying along the Chudovo—Novgorod railroad and highway. It was not possible to breach the defenses without a pause.

For 3 days there was intense fighting to capture the enemy strongpoints of Spasskaya Polist, Mostki, Myasnoy Bor. During the night of 24 January, the army's formations captured Myasnoy Bor, having breached on this axis the main zone of the enemy defenses. For restoring the situation, the Nazi Command was forced to shift troops from other sectors of the front, including from around Leningrad. Instead of preparing to storm the city, Army Group North itself went over to the defensive.

On 25 January, the XIII Cavalry Corps of Maj Gen N.I. Gusev was committed to the breach which was formed after the breakthrough of the enemy defenses in area of Myasnoy Bor. In cooperating with the formations of the 2d Assault Army, the corps began to advance successfully deep into the enemy defenses. Over 5 days of fighting, its units drove up to 40 km into the enemy positions and cut the Leningrad—Novgorod Railroad in the area of Finev Lug. The advance was going on successfully as long as the corps was advancing to the northwest where the Nazis had insignificant forces. The troops advancing directly toward Lyuban had little success, as they encountered organized resistance along the defensive position on the line of Verkhovye, Krasnaya Gorka, Zalesye.

At the end of February, the front's command turned to Hq SHC with a proposal to regroup the forces in the aim of releasing troops to reinforce the 2d Assault Army advancing against Lyuban with the task of cutting the Leningrad Highway as well as formations of the 59th Army.

On 26 February, Hq SHC approved the reinforcing of the armies but was against halting the offensive in order to put the first echelon divisions into order. On the same day the troops of the 2d Assault Army after a brief artillery softening up attacked the enemy on the front of Verkhovye, Zalesye. In surmounting stubborn enemy resistance, they pushed into the enemy defenses and captured the population point of Krasnaya Gorka. To exploit the success the decided to employ the 80th Cavalry Division of Col M.N. Polyakov and the 327th Rifle Divisions of Col I.M. Antyufeyev. The 80th Cavalry Division was committed to the breach first followed by the 327th Rifle Division. However, the latter did not succeed in pushing completely into the breach. On the next day, the enemy with the forces of the defending units of the 225th and 254th infantry divisions and units from the approaching 212th Infantry Division closed the breach. The 80th Cavalry Division and 1100th Rifle Regiment (commander Maj M.Kh. Pavlovtssev) from the 327th Rifle Division which had been committed to the breach were isolated from the main forces of the army. Over a period of 5 days they were heavily engaged. When the ammunition had begun to run out, the 80th Cavalry Division and the 1100th Rifle Regiment by a night attack breached the enemy defenses from the rear to the west of Krasnaya Gorka and linked up with the army troops. After the breach which had been formed as a result of the breakthrough had been closed, the troops from the assault group of the 2d Assault Army for a period of 2 weeks endeavored to rebreach the enemy defenses on this sector but without success.

Thus, in the first half of March, the offensive actions on all axes began to weaken. The 2d Assault Army, having driven 60 group of the 2d Assault Army for a period of 2 weeks endeavored to rebreach the enemy defenses on this sector but without success.

Thus, in the first half of March, the offensive actions on all axes began to weaken. The 2d Assault Army, having 70 km into the enemy defenses, had captured a small wooded and swampy area between the Chudovo—Novgorod and Leningrad—Novgorod railroads. Its forward units were 15 km to the southwest of Lyuban, however, the army troops were unable to take the city.

The 2d Assault Army, having pushed far into the enemy's defenses, did not have the forces for a further offensive and itself was in a difficult situation. The threat of enemy attacks loomed, primarily against the flanks of the neck of the breakthrough. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that spring was approaching and with this the muddy season which would impede troop supply.

The enemy moved up new forces, including the 58th Infantry Division and a SS police division to the breakthrough sector in the area of the Chudovo—Novgorod highway and railroad. On 19 March, it succeeded in

closing the neck of the breakthrough some 4 km to the west of Myasnoy Bor and thereby cut the lines of communications of the 2d Assault Army.

On 25 March, by a thrust of the 376th Rifle Division of Lt Col Ugorich and 372d Rifle Division of Lt Col D.S. Sorokin, the enemy units which had besieged the road and blocked the neck were pushed back to the north and south. From 27 March, supplies for the 2d Assault Army were resumed. Subsequently the Nazi Command, having moved up a large number of troops to the Lyuban area, after extended and fierce fighting, on 6 June 1943, closed the neck of the breakthrough. Formations of the 2d Assault Army had been encircled. From 8 through 25 June, the troops of the 52d and 59th armies from the east and the 2d Assault Army from the west forced a breach in the enemy defenses. As a result of the heavy, intense fighting, a large portion of the troops from the 2d Assault Army escaped from encirclement. Many did not succeed in breaking out of the ring. The army military council member, Divisional Commissar I.V. Zuyev, the chief of the special section A.G. Shashkov and the divisional commanders S.I. Bulanov and F.Ye. Chernyy were killed.

In conducted the Lyuban Operation, the men of the army showed mass heroism in endeavoring to release Leningrad from the enemy blockade. Thousands of soldiers received order and medals. The 366th Rifle Division of Col S.I. Bulanov and 111th Rifle Division of Col S.V. Roginskiy which had most distinguished themselves in the fighting by the order of the USSR people's commissar of defense in March 1942 became the 19th and 24th Guards Rifle Divisions.

As for the betrayal of A.A. Vlasov. The former commander of the Volkhov Front, MSU K.A. Meretakov recalled these events in the following manner. "We took every measure to locate the army military council and staff. When in the morning of 25 June, the arriving officers reported that they had seen Gen Vlasov and other senior officers in the area of the narrow-gauge railroad, I immediately sent a tank company there with a mounted infantry party and my aide Capt M.G. Boroda who along with the tanks reached the area indicated by the officers, but no one was there. In knowing that the staff had a receiver, we periodically transmitted by radio orders to pull out. By the evening of the same day, several reconnaissance groups were sent out with the task of locating the army military council and bringing it out. But all was in vain.

"As we later learned, all the leadership of the army staff had been split up into three groups which during the night of 24-25 June should have pulled out with the units and staffs of the attacking troops. The army military council accompanied by a company of submachine gunners at 2300 hours on 24 June reached the area of the 46th Rifle Division and was to pull out with its units. On the way it was discovered that none of the staff workers

knew where the command post of the 46th Rifle Division was. They were travelling blindly. In approaching the Polist River, all three groups came under heavy enemy mortar and artillery fire. Some hit the dirt, while others in endeavoring to escape from the shelling, scattered in various directions. The army military council and the signals chief, Gen Afanasyev, who subsequently related this entire story to us, headed to the north but the Germans were there. Then the decision was taken to retreat into the enemy rear and then, having advanced several kilometers to the north, to cross the front line at a different place. Characteristically in discussing the actions planned by the group, Gen Vlasov did not take any part. He was indifferent to all changes in the group's movement.

"On the second day the group of Gen Afanasyev encountered the Luga Partisan Detachment of Comrade Dmitriyev. Dmitriyev helped Afanasyev get in contact with the commander of the partisan detachment in Oredezhskiy Rayon, Comrade Sazanov, who had a radio. With the aid of this radio Gen Afanasyev on 14 July informed the staff of the Volkhov Front of his position and the fate of the military council of the 2d Assault Army and then was airlifted out.

"Having received the radio message from Afanasyev, I immediately called A.A. Zhdanov and requested him to give orders to the commander of the Oredezhskiy partisan detachment to locate Gen Vlasov and his associates.

"Comrade Sazanov sent out three groups of partisans who examined all the terrain around Poddubye for many kilometers. Vlasov was not to be found. In mid August a message was received from the partisans that Gen Vlasov on 6 August in the village of Pyatnitsa had gone over to the Nazis. He set out on the black path of betraying the motherland." (3)

"The further fate of Vlasov, the lone traitor, is well known. Having set out to collaborate with the enemy, Vlasov won universal disdain even from Hitler who, regardless of Himmler's repeated attempts to introduce the captured general to him, refused to meet him, stating that a man who betrayed his motherland could also betray us. Finally Vlasov was granted an audience with Himmler who sanctioned the establishing of the ROA or the Russian Liberation Army of traitors. The Soviet people called it the 'Vlasov Army'.... The 2d Assault Army which carried its colors the Baltic Coast of the Nazi Reich had no relation to it. It was further established that not a single man from the 2d Assault Army who was captured at Myasnoy Bor later served in the 'Vlasov Army'." (4)

In suffering heavy losses in the Lyuban Operation, the 2d Assault Army after a brief rest and reconstituting took part in the Sinyavino Operation (19 August-10 October 1942) to relieve Leningrad and thwart the attempt being readied by the enemy to again storm the city.

In September 1942, the Nazi Command was planning to conduct Operation Nordlicht (Northern Lights) in the aim of capturing Leningrad. This operation was to involve the 18th Army reinforced by formations from the 11th Army shifted from the Crimea as well as several divisions moved from Western Europe and large artillery and aviation forces.

The Soviet Command, having anticipated the enemy in attacking in August 1942, began an offensive on the Sinyavino axis. The plan was by meeting attacks by the Leningrad and Volkhov Fronts to defeat the Mga-Sinyavino enemy grouping and restore the overland link of Leningrad the rest of the land.

Having breached the enemy defenses in the sector of the 227th and 223d Infantry Divisions, the troops had reached the approaches to Sinyavino and Mga and had driven more than 7 km into the German defenses. In order to recover the situation, the enemy committed to battle the 107th Infantry Division reinforced with units the 12 Panzer Division. The advance of our troops slowed down. For boosting the effort the IV Guards Rifle Corps of Maj Gen Gagen was committed to the breach. In overcoming enemy resistance, the corps, in outflanking Sinyavino to the south, advanced 2-3 km.

On 6 September, the 2d Assault Army was committed to the breach. The Nazis hurriedly shifted six fresh divisions (including one panzer) to the breakthrough area and this made it possible in the second half of September to halt the Soviet troop advance and launch strong flank counterstrikes. Up to 27 September, our troops repulsed the enemy attacks and then began to retreat to the eastern bank of the Chernaya River and by 1 October had gone over to the defensive.

In fighting as part of the Volkhov Front, the men of the 2d Assault Army made a major contribution to thwarting the enemy plan to storm Leningrad.

On 8 December 1942, Hq SHC issued a directive to the Volkhov and Leningrad Fronts to prepare an operation in the aim of breaking the Leningrad blockade. "By the joint efforts of the Volkhov and Leningrad Fronts," it stated, "the enemy grouping is to be defeated in the area of Lipka—Gaytologo—Moskovskaya Dubrovka—Shlisselburg and, thus, to break the siege of Leningrad...." (5)

The 2d Assault Army (commander, Lt Gen V.Z. Romanovskiy), in accord with the overall plan of the front's command, was to breach the enemy defenses on the sector of Lipka—Gaytologo, launching the main thrust against Sinyavino, and capture the line of Rabochiy Poselok (Worker Settlement) No 1, Rabochiy Poselok No 3, Sinyavino.

The army offensive was preceded by extensive and painstaking work in the troops. Exercises were conducted in the units and formations for military and political training. The questions of breaching the enemy defenses were worked out on training fields resembling the type of enemy defenses.

During the period of preparing for the offensive, the army was visited by the secretary of Leningrad party gorkom and member of the military council of the Leningrad Front, A.A. Kuznetsov, with a group of workers. They spoke to the soldiers and commanders and described how Leningrad was living and fighting. Comrade A.A. Kuznetsov himself repeatedly spoke to the men of the army. He was an intelligent, literate and sensitive party worker.

Extensive work was carried out by the staffs and political sections of the army and the front in order to prepare the troops for the heavy fighting to breach the strong enemy defenses.

On 12 January 1943, the army first echelon formations went over to the offensive. Over a period of 5 days the divisions of the 2d Assault Army were heavily engaged, advancing slowly to Rabochiy Poseloka No 1, 5, 7 and to the stations of Podgornaya, Sinyavino.

On 16 January, the 128th Rifle Division (commander, Maj Gen F.A. Parkhomenko) in cooperation with the 12th Ski Brigade (commander, Lt Col N.A. Sebov) which had outflanked the strongpoint of Lipka over the ice of Lake Ladoga, captured it.

On the following day, the army troops took from the enemy Rabochiy Poseloka No 4, 7 and 8, the stations of Podgornaya and Sinyavino, and continued fierce fighting for Rabochiy Poseloka No 1 and 5. On 18 January, the formations of the 2d Assault Army (commander, Lt Gen V.Z. Romanovskiy) of the Volkhov Front and the 67th Army (commander, Maj Gen M.P. Dukhanov) of the Leningrad Front linked up in the area of Rabochiy Poseloka No 1 and 5. On the same day, Shlisselburg was liberated and the entire southern coast of Lake Ladoga was cleared of the enemy. A corridor some 8-11 km wide driven along the shore restored the overland link of Leningrad with the nation.

Subsequently the formations of the 2d Assault Army in cooperation with divisions from the 67th Army endeavored to continue the offensive to the south, but with success. From 19 through 30 January, the enemy moved up into the Sinyavino area five divisions and a large amount of artillery and tanks. In order to prevent it from again reaching Lake Ladoga, the troops of the 2d Assault and 67th Armies went over to the defensive.

From February to mid July 1943, the army as part of the Leningrad, Volkhov and later again the Leningrad Front defended a line to the southeast of Shlisselburg. Then it was put into the reserve of the Leningrad Front.

At the beginning of 1944, the 2d Assault Army under the command of Lt Gen I.I. Fedyuninskiy and including the XLIII Rifle Corps of Maj Gen A.I. Andreyev, the CVIII Rifle Corps of Maj Gen M.F. Tikhonov and the CXXII Rifle Corps of Maj Gen P.A. Zaytsev, was concentrated on the Oranienbaum bridgehead. Preparations for the offensive operation at Leningrad continued for several months. The regrouping of the 2d Assault Army to the Oranienbaum bridgehead was carried out by the forces of the Baltic Fleet. The troops and military equipment were transported in the Neva Gulf under very difficult conditions, in direct proximity to enemy-held shores and within the range of artillery fire. As a total they delivered to the bridgehead across the Gulf of Riga some 5 rifle divisions, 12 artillery formations and units, a tank brigade, 2 tank regiments and a SAU regiment, a large amount of ammunition and various freight.(6)

On 14 January 1944, the formations of the army went over to the offensive and by the end of the day on the axis of the main thrust had pushed 4-5 km into the enemy defenses and then, without breaking off the offensive and repelling numerous enemy counterattacks, were advancing toward Ropsha. In fearing the encirclement of the Peterhof—Strelna grouping, the enemy began to pull its units from the settlements of Strelna, Volodarskiy and Gorelovo in the direction of Krasnoye Selo. For exploiting the success on the axis of the main thrust, the commander of the 2d Assault Army on 18 January committed the second echelon to battle. On the following day its troops successfully took Ropsha.

Over the 6 days of fighting, the 2d Assault Army had crushed the strong German defenses, it had widened the breach and advanced more than 25 km in depth. After linking up with the 42d Army of Col Gen I.I. Maslennikov to the west of Krasnoye Selo, a common front was formed for the two field forces and these continued the offensive to the west and southwest. Having crossed the Luga River on 30 January, the troops captured a number of bridgeheads on its left bank. On 1 February, the 2d Assault Army captured the town Kingisepp. Two days later its formations reached the Narva River and captured a bridgehead some 35 km along the front and 15 km in depth on its western bank. The fighting to hold this was of an exceptionally fierce nature. By continuous counterattacks the enemy endeavored to push the army back across the river. However, our troops held out. The fighting here did not die down until mid July, but it was not possible to liberate the city Narva. Only on 26 July, did the troops of the 2d Assault Army in cooperation with the 8th Army capture the fortress city of Narva.

Having turned over its defensive zone on the Narva bridgehead, the army on 4 September began to move to areas to the south and southeast of Tartu for participating in the Tallinn Operation (17-26 September 1944). By 12 September, a large portion of its troops was concentrated in the designated areas. On 17 September, after artillery softening up, the army's formations went over to the offensive. Having breached the forward edge of the

enemy defenses, units from the 63 Guard Rifle Division of Maj Gen A.F. Shcheglov and the 90th Rifle Division which at that time I happened to command at noon linked up in the Tilga area, having surrounded and destroyed around two German regiments.

In continuing the offensive, the army troops on the first day advanced up to 18 km into the enemy defenses along a front of 30 km. The enemy, retreating to the north, put up stubborn resistance using favorable natural barrier and population points for defenses.

On the next day, in committing to battle the 326th Rifle Division of Maj Gen G.S. Kolchanov and 321st of Col V.K. Chesnokov from the CXVI Rifle Corps of Maj Gen F.K. Fetisov, the army widened the breakthrough front to 45 km and fought its way forward 28 km, having liberated a large number of population points.

By the end of the day of 20 September, the troops of the 2d Assault Army had captured the population point of Rakvere and on 22 September, in cooperation with the 8th Army, formed a common front of advance. On 22 September, Pyarnu was liberated, a city and port on the Gulf of Riga coast.

Having shattered enemy resistance, the army went over to pursuing the scattered units retreating along the Gulf of Riga coast to the south and by the end of the day of 26 September, reached the line of Pikovere, Auduru, Staylele, Maesalanitse, thereby carrying out the task posed for it, and linked up with troops of the Third Baltic Front.

On 27 September, by a decision of Hq SHC, the 2d Assault Army was pulled back into the reserves. On 17 October 1944, it became part of the Second Belorussian Front and was concentrated in the area of Ostrow Mazowiecka. Up to the end of September, the personnel was engaged in combat and political training, the formations were brought up to strength with personnel, weapons and equipment and prepared for combat. At the beginning of January 1945, the army troops were moved to the Ruza bridgehead and had taken up the forming up place for an offensive.

On 14 January 1945, in going over to the offensive after artillery softening up, the army's troops captured the first two enemy trenches and in overcoming stubborn enemy resistance, began to move forward. In the second half of the day, the Nazi Command in the zone of advance of the army, initiated a series of counterattacks. By the end of the day, in fighting hard, the army formations had advanced 4-6 km but had been unable to breach the defenses to their entire depth. On the following day, the VIII Guards Tank Corps of Lt Gen Tank Trpa P.P. Poluboyarov, in being committed to battle, concluded the breach of the main zone of enemy defenses. In overcoming stubborn enemy resistance, the army's troops on 25 January had reached the Vistula and

Nogat Rivers, in several places had crossed them, but were unable to widen the bridgeheads and capture without a pause the fortresses of Graudinetz, Elbing and Marienburg.

On 27 January, the enemy launched a strong counterstrike from the Heilsberg area against the troops of the adjacent 48th Army of Col Gen N.I. Gusev and began to press them. The 2d Assault Army was forced with a portion of its forces to go over to the defensive to repel the German counterstrike. As a result of the defensive fighting, the enemy suffered significant losses and the army troops on 10 February, took Elbing by storm. As a result of the many days of heavy fighting conducted under winter conditions, the 2d Assault Army had liberated the towns of Pultusk, Ciechanow, Lidzbark, Nowe Miasto, Deuti-Eilau, Saalfeld, Riesenburg, Marienburg, Elbing and many population points.

With the start of the East Pomeranian Operation (10 February-4 April 1945), the 2d Assault Army using a portion of its forces fought to destroy the enemy surrounded in the Vistula Delta and sealed off in Graudenze. The main forces were moved to the left bank of the Vistula into the zone of the 65th Army (commander, Col Gen P.K. Batov).

The offensive by the 65th Army and the 2d Assault Army initially developed slowly. There was hard fighting for each strongpoint. The enemy in the zone of advance of our troops created a strong and deeply echeloned defense with well equipped centers of resistance.

The storming of the Grudziadz Fortress which began in the second half of February ended on 6 March with the surrender of the enemy garrison. Over 8,000 soldiers and officers were taken prisoner. By the end of the day of 18 March, after bloody fighting, the army troops reached the forward defensive edge of the Danzig fortified area. The army's formations were fighting on the line of Vogtai, Katzke.

The Danzig Fortress served as the main strongpoint on the left flank of the enemy defensive zone along the left bank of the Vistula and toward the sea was a narrow coastal defense. Chains of strong defensive forts linked its coastal position with the central defensive zone. The coastal defensive artillery, six cruisers, five destroyers, eight coastal defense patrol boats, torpedo boats and submarine provided fire support for the troops defending Danzig.

As a result of 13 days of fighting, the army troops breached the three zones of enemy defenses and by the end of the day of 26 March had begun fighting in the city outskirts. The storming of Danzig last 4 days and on 30 March, the city was completely cleared of the enemy.

Regardless of the inevitable doom of the Danzig grouping, its troops continued to resist fiercely. On 30 March, army formation, in cooperation with formations and

units from the 65th Army and the 19th Army of Lt Gen V.Z. Romanovskiy had completed captured the city and port of Danzig. The remnants of the enemy troops retreated to the swampy mouth of the Vistula where they subsequently surrendered.

The defeat of the Danzig troop grouping and the capture of the fortress and important naval base, the port and city of Danzig were a major victory. The army's formations and units which most distinguished themselves in the fighting received the honorific designator of Gdansk and were awarded orders.

In the Bertin Operation (16 April-8 May 1945) the army was to fight in the second echelon of the front.

On 15 April, in successfully carrying out a regrouping of the troops, the 2d Assault Army was concentrated on the line of Kammin, Altdamm, having relieved units of the 1st Polish Army. On 20 April, having crossed the Oder, the troops of the front in 5 days of heavy, stubborn fighting, had advanced 8-10 km. The enemy put up strong resistance everywhere. The front's commander, MSU K.K. Rokossovskiy, ordered the 2d Assault Army, in using the crossings of the 65th Army, to cross the Oder and carry out an offensive on the axis of Anklam, Stralsund, covering the right flank of the main assault grouping of the front, and with a portion of the forces, to liberate the ports and island of the Pomeranian Bay.

On 27 April, the army had cleared the enemy from the city Stettin and Gristow Island and was approaching the city of Swinemunde. The main forces, in advancing along the southern coast of the Stettin Lagoon, were approaching Anklam and on 29 April, after fierce fighting, took it; on 30 April, the entered Greifswald. In retreating, the enemy blew up bridges, it destroyed and mined the roads, and put up stubborn resistance at each population point. On 1 May, after heavy fighting, the town and port Stralsund and the town of Grimmen were taken, and on 5 May, the large port and naval base of Swinemunde. The garrisons of the islands of Rugen, Hiddensee, Wollin and Usedom had surrendered. The fighting of the 2d Assault Army ended with capturing of these islands.

For the courage and heroism shown in the fighting against the Nazi occupiers, the troops of the 2d Assault Army in the orders of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief were commended some 24 times, some 99 units and formations received honorific designators, 191 formations and units were awarded orders of the Soviet Union. Many thousands of men from the army received orders and medals and 103 received the title of Hero of the Soviet Union.

Footnotes

1. The 2d Assault Army (the former 26th Army) was organized in November 1941 in the Volga Military District. At the end of December, the field force became part of the newly organized Volkhov Front and participated in the Lyuban Operation.

2. Lt Gen N.K. Klykov was in command of the 2d Assault Army from 10 January 1942 until 16 April 1942. Because of illness in mid April he was forced leave the army and Lt Gen A.A. Vlasov assumed command from 16 April 1942.

3. *Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, No 1, 1963, pp 69-70.

4. *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 12 August 1987.

5. "Istoriya Velikoy Otechestvennoy voyny Sovetskogo Soyuza 1941-1945" [History of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union of 1941-1945], Moscow, Voenizdat, Vol 3, 1964, p 121.

6. "Velikaya Otechestvennaya voyna 1941-1945: Entsiklopediya" [The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945: An Encyclopedia], Moscow, Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya, 1985, p 515.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskiy zhurnal", 1988.
10272

Combat Operations of LXXIX Rifle Corps
00010034k Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press
24 Feb 88) pp 78-83

[Article by Col (Ret) M.M. Bondar: "In the Headwaters of the Velikaya River"]

[Text] In the spring of 1944(1), having appointed to the position of commander of the LXXIX Rifle Corps, Col S.N. Perevertkin reported to the commander of the 3rd Assault Army, Lt Col V.A. Yushkevich. At the end of the meeting, the army commander said:

"Semen Nikiforovich [Perevertkin], you must give some thought on how to improve the corps's position."

The LXXIX Rifle Corps was on the defensive in the ancient lands of Pskov. The forward edge ran along the Velikaya River and a chain of lakes and low ridges to the north of the town of Pustoshka.

After a careful study of the situation initially on a map and then in the field, Col Perevertkin chose the sectors for launching the attacks. The 150th Rifle Division (commander, Col M.I. Shatilov) was to take elev. 228.4, the 171st Division (acting commander, Lt Col M.V. Makeyev) elev. 166.9, and 207th Division (commander, Col I.P. Mikulya) the nameless elevation to the east of the population point of Laukhin.

The slopes of elev. 228.4 which had unofficially been named Zaozernaya and was covered with brush and a sparse pine forest were steep and impassable. This elevation prevailed over the terrain and was a major obstacle for the Soviet troops offensive. Zaozernaya was defended by a company from the the 32d Infantry

Regiment of the 15th Latvian SS Division. In addition, on the back slopes of this elevation there was an infantry battalion. Elev. 166.9, some 6 km to the south of Zaozernaya, had gentle slopes and a bald peak. Here the defenses were occupied by a reinforced regiment from the 2d Battalion of the 553rd Regiment of the 329th Nazi Infantry Division. The nameless hill to the east of Laukhin had a brush-covered peak where the 7th Company of the 551st Regiment of the 329th Division were positioned in trenches.(2)

On all three elevations a developed system of full-height trenches and communications trenches had been established and there were numerous machine gun nests. All of this was covered by minefields and wire obstacles. The elevations were important strongpoints in the defensive line established by the Nazis during the winter-spring period of 1944.

The plan of the corps commander was, in diverting attention and tying down the reserves in fighting for the elevations 166.9 and to the east of Laukhin, to take Zaozernaya by a rapid assault.(3) The corps staff headed by Col A.I. Letunov worked out a plan for preparing the conducting the offensive.

The carrying out of this mission was to involve the 10th and 297th Separate Companies and the 175th Separate Reconnaissance Company. They were to be supported by 27 direct laying guns from the divisional artillery and the 163rd Antitank Artillery Regiment of the RVGK [Reserve of the Supreme High Command], the 136th Army Cannon Artillery Brigade (minus an artillery battalion), the 328th Artillery Regiment from the 150th Division as well as guns and mortars from the artillery and mortar subunits of the rifle regiments, a battalion of rocket artillery from the 63rd Guard Mortar [Rocket] Regiment and a company (9 tanks) from the 29th Guards Tank Brigade. The 221st and 890th Separate Combat Engineer Battalions from the division and corps were used for engineer support. Immediate leadership of the storming of the elevation was assigned to the commander of the 674th Regiment, Lt Col A.I. Pinchuk. In the reserve of the regimental commander was the battalion of Maj N.F. Bril'kov and in the reserve of the divisional commander, the 469th Regiment of Col N.N. Balynin.(4)

For assaulting elevation 166.9, in the 171st Rifle Division they assigned the 56th Separate Company reinforced by a chemical engineer platoon with 13 static flamethrowers, a platoon of scouts, 6 direct laying guns and a company from the 137th Separate Combat Engineer Battalion. They were supported by the 357th Separate Artillery Regiment, a battalion of the 136th Army Cannon Artillery Brigade and a battalion of the 203rd Guards Mortar [Rocket] Regiment. The reserve of each of the regimental and divisional commanders was a rifle battalion. Leadership over the assault was assigned to the commander of the 525th Rifle Regiment, Lt Col Y.M. Yangayev.(5)

On the approaches to the nameless hill, the 202d Separate Company of Capt G.N. Pyschchikov and the reconnaissance company from the 207th Rifle Division of Capt I.Ya. Matveyev were to conduct a reconnaissance in forces and capture a prisoner for interrogation.(6)

The 380th Rifle Regiment was in the combine-arms reserve of the corps commander. For conducting counterbattery bombardment, a corps artillery group was established consisting of a battalion from the 136th Army Cannon Artillery Brigade and a battalion from the 203rd Guards Mortar Regiment.(7)

The scouts established that each day the Nazis at 0800 hours in the morning removed the personnel from the first trenches to rest in shelters on the western slopes of the elevations, leaving only observers and duty machine gunners on the forward edge.

Col S.N. Perevertkin decided to begin the storming of all three elevations at 0900 hours on 22 June after a rocket volley against the enemy trenches and reserves and heavy artillery shelling. In the offensive they planned a three-echelon battle formation of the separate companies and these were to advance at a distance of 50 meters apart. Due to the fact that on Zaozernaya there were three lines of trenches, the direct laying guns were divided into three groups and each was to fire at its own line. With the capturing of the first and second lines, all the guns were to focus on the third.(8)

The plan for the offensive of the LXXIX Corps was examined in detail and approved by the commander of the 3rd Assault Army, Lt Gen V.A. Yushkevich. For maintaining secrecy, all the orders and instructions related to the forthcoming offensive actions were issued personally by the corps commander and transmitted through the staff officers.

The commander of the 150th Division in the rear chose an elevation similar to Zaozernaya and built a strong defensive center on it. Here during a week they trained the rifle battalion of Maj N.F. Bril'kov and the separate companies of Sr Lts G.S. Reshetnyak and N.Z. Korolev together with the attached artillery troops, combat engineers, chemical troops and scouts. Analogous exercises were conducted in the 171st Rifle Division on one of the hills to the east of Sevast'ev.(9)

Spending time frequently along with Col S.N. Perevertkin at these exercises were the Chief of the Corps Political Section, Col I.S. Krylov, the artillery commander Col N.B. Livshits, the chiefs of the services and staff officers as well as the commanders of the attached units. During the drills particular attention was paid to achieving synchronous actions of all the forces in the assault and in the course of the fighting to hold the captured lines. The detected shortcomings were immediately eliminated.

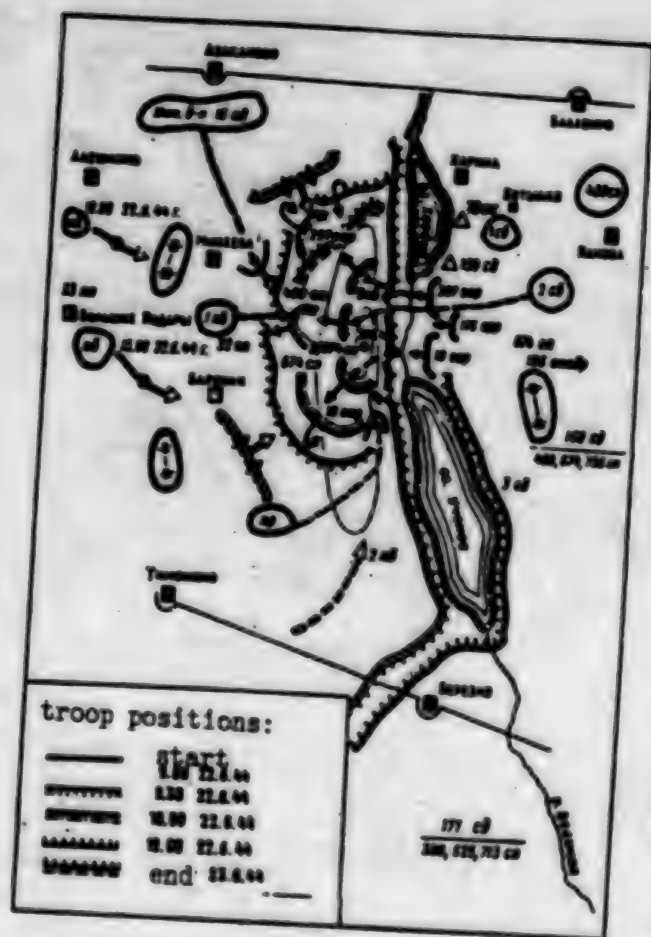


Diagram of Action for Capturing Elev. 228.4
(Zaouernaya)

Starting from 18 June, combined-arms, artillery and engineer reconnaissance was conducted continuously. It was possible to determine the state of the enemy defenses, the location of the defensive structures, the position of the mixed minefields and wire obstacles as well as clarify the fire plan. The artillery troops took up new positions, observation posts were built and registration fire was carried out. The combat engineers under the leadership of the corps engineer, Lt Col V.V. Bondarev, deactivated the landmines and moved up previously made frame structures for a bridge with a load capacity of 10 tons for moving artillery and motor transport.(10)

In the units and subunits to be involved in storming the elevations, party political work was aimed at achieving high combat morale of the men and at mobilizing their efforts to carry out the set battle tasks. The commanders and political workers gave talks and reports, and meetings were conducted by officers, NCOs and soldiers who had already been in battle.

On 20 and 21 June, the final drills were conducted in the divisions. In summing up their results, S.N. Perevertkin

and I.S. Krylov urged the men to honorable carry out their sacred duty to the motherland and successfully execute the battle tasks confronting them.

On 21 June, with the onset of darkness, the rifle subunits assigned for the offensive with the attached combat engineers, chemical troops and scouts took up the forming-up place. The direct laying guns were readied for firing. The reserves were moved closer to the forward edge.

Late in the evening, Col S.N. Perevertkin arrived at the observation post set up by the combat engineers on a hill near Lake Khvoyno from where there was a good view of the northern slopes of Zaouernaya and the approaches to it from the northwest. Col N.B. Livshits, Lt Col V.V. Bondarev and the assistant signals chief, Maj M.P. Botman reported on the work done and the readiness of the men for action.

The next morning the sun seemingly rose with unusual slowness, dispelling the fog which hung over the hills, copses and lakes. According to information from observers from the forward edge, there were no changes in the Nazi trenches nor any suspicious activities noted. There was every reason to assume that the enemy did not suspect anything. The corps commander asked Col V.V. Bondarev:

"What about the approaches to the enemy minefields, were the combat engineers able to make them during the night?"

"Yes, sir! They were made and marked with special sign," replied the corps engineer.

Then Col Perevertkin spoke again with the divisional commanders making certain that everything was fully ready, and then ordered them to follow the approved plan.

At exactly 0900 hours on 22 June 1944, one day prior to the start of the Belorussian Operation, the sky was rent by the fiery tongues of the "katiushas" and the volleys of scores of guns and mortars shattered the silence.(11) After a brief artillery softening up, the infantry moved forward.

From the command post through the binoculars one could clearly see G.S. Reshetnyak running ahead of his company with a pistol in hand, and to the left carrying a submachine gun was the commander of the other company N.Z. Korolev, and behind him the scouts of N.I. Kozlov. About 10 minutes after the start of the assault, the attackers had broken into the first enemy trench. Fierce hand-to-hand fighting broke out. At that time the direct laying gun crews headed by Capt T.V. Nako-nchay shifted fire to the second and third trenches.

At 0940 hours, Lt Col A.I. Pinchuk received a report that the elevation had been taken and telephoned the divisional commander about the success achieved.(12) The 9th Company from the 32d Nazi Regiment which was defending the hill was almost completely destroyed. Eleven men were taken prisoner.(13)

At 1000 hours, the enemy began to counterattack the subunits which had seized Zaozernaya with forces of up to two companies. The advance of the attackers somewhat slowed down.

Around noon the divisional scouts reported the movement of Nazi infantry from the direction of Aleshkino toward Zaozernaya and from Bogomolovo toward elev. 166.9.(14) Having assessed the situation, the commander of the LXXIX Corps ordered the reserve battalions of the regiments to be shifted to the captured hills. Soon thereafter the battalion of N.F. Brillkov reached Zaozernaya and deployed into battle formation on the northwestern slopes. By this time all the direct laying guns had moved up to the hill and taken up firing positions on likely tank approaches.

Soon after noon, the enemy, having subjected the hill and the approaches to it from the east to massed artillery and mortar fire, counterattacked the battle formations of the corps units with forces of up to two infantry battalions with 12 tanks. Our men in a 4-hour intense battle were able not only to hold the hill, but also hit 2 tanks as well as destroy at least 400 enemy soldiers and officers.(15) At around 1800 hours up to two Nazi battalions attacked the right flank of the 674th Rifle Regiment which had taken up positions on the hill. Soon thereafter more than 300 submachine gunners with 5 tanks, having pressed the defending troops, rushed toward the top of Zaozernaya. However, by a bold counterattack the enemy was halted.

In this fighting, Sr Lt V.M. Kupriyanov distinguished himself. His company did not flinch when its flanks were enveloped. The courageous officer was awarded the Order of Aleksandr Nevskiy. Sr Lt V.I. Savitskiy, when the enemy tanks were approaching the crest of the hill, was able by the fire of the two remaining guns to hit several enemy vehicles and repel the Nazi assault. His feat was recognized by the Order of the Patriotic War Second Degree.(16)

On elev. 166.9, the separate company of Capt M.M. Kiselev with scouts after 15 minutes had reached the first enemy trench. By 1230 hours, our troops had succeeded in taking the second trench as well. However, further advance on the southern slopes of the hill was halted by strong enemy fire.(17)

It was not possible to utilize the achieved success, as the subunits which had delayed in the advance on the forward edge came under heavy artillery and mortar fire and were unable to break through to the attacking

company. Only the regimental chemical troops headed by Capt N.G. Gromov were able to reach the separate company and set out several static flamethrowers.(18)

At that time the enemy was moving up constantly new forces to elev. 166.9, obviously figuring that the main thrust was being launched here. In realizing the complexity of the situation, the corps commander demanded that M.V. Bakeyev commit the divisional reserve to battle. Soon thereafter a report was received from Maj M.A. Ivasik that the order had been carried out and the battalion had taken up positions on the southwestern slopes of the hill.

Having moved up up to two infantry battalions with several tanks, the Nazis at 1600 hours resumed the counterattacks. This time the extended enemy chains advanced from two sides against the defending troops. The close cooperation of the Soviet infantrymen with the artillery, the valor and courage of the men made it possible to repulse the enemy drive. However, victory was achieved at a high price. The losses were so high that Lt Col M.V. Bakeyev, with the permission of the corps commander, was forced to move the division's training company to the hill.(19)

On the nameless hill to the east of Laukhin, the 202d Separate and Reconnaissance Companies broke into the first Nazi trench and captured two prisoners, but because of the heavy enemy fire were forced to retreat and take up the initial position.(20) However, they carried out their task as they distracted the attention of the Nazis from elev. Zaozernaya.

The ever-more complex situation on Zaozernaya and elev. 166.9 greatly concerned the corps commander. S.N. Perevertkin ordered the commander of the 150th Division to commit his reserve, the battalion of I.V. Koltunov, to action. The battalion was unable to dig in on the hill, as the enemy at around 1700 hours began a new offensive. This time it was carried out by arriving reserves from the northwest and west. At a critical moment the artillery troops came to the aid of our infantry. The heavy cannons of Maj Ye.A. Demidov and Capt I.R. Mirkin homed in on the enemy.

The corps command post received data that enemy tanks and mounted infantry were moving from Idrissa toward Zaozernaya. Col S.N. Perevertkin immediately demanded that the divisional commander send the 469th Rifle Regiment and a tank company additionally to the hill.

In approaching the crossing over the Velikaya River, this regiment came under enemy artillery shelling and suffered losses. The regiment's commander, Col N.N. Balyinin, sustained a mortal wound and soon thereafter died. However, the unit reached the hill and organized an defense on its northwestern slopes to the right of the 674th Rifle Regiment.

Since the main battle tasks had been carried out, Col S.N. Perevertkin at 1900 hours on 22 June gave orders to go over to a rigid defense of the positions captured on elev. Zaozernaya and 166.9.(21)

Unexpectedly at around 0300 hours during the night of 23 June, Lt Col M.V. Bakseyev phoned the corps command post. He stated that in the first half of the night, the enemy with strong infantry and tank forces with artillery and mortar support, had launched an attack from three sides against the troops defending elev. 166.9. The subunits there from the rifle battalion, the separate and training companies, after 2 hours of fighting, had retreated to the initial positions.(22)

Col S.N. Perevertkin demanded that the commander of the 171st Rifle Division bring the retreating subunits into order and in the morning organize an assault on elev. 166.9. Then the corps commander ordered me:

"Go to Zaozernaya and see how the situation is there. Pay attention to organizing cooperation and the fire plan!"

I made my way to the hill without any problems. I made my way through a communications trench down the back slopes and reached the battalion of I.V. Koltunov. Together with him, I made my way through the companies. Everywhere intense work was under way: destroyed sections of trenches were being rebuilt and new ones dug, shells, cartridges and grenades were being carried up. Then I moved on to the battalion of V.I. Davydov. I found him in a trench together with the commander of the 3rd Battalion, Capt F.A. Ionkin. Together with the commanders of the artillery and tank subunits, they were working out cooperation plans in the event of the appearance of the enemy.

In the 674th Rifle Regiment, I found its commander, Lt Col A.I. Pinchuk, in the first trench where he was inspecting the course of engineer work and giving battle tasks to the battalion commanders. I got back near morning.

Having listened to my report, the corps commander said:

"It will be good if we can get all the planned work done...."

At dawn of 23 June, before the morning fog had dispersed, the Nazis launched heavy artillery fire and a strong air strike against Zaozernaya. Then Nazi tanks and extended lines of infantry advanced toward the hill. The situation was particularly dangerous in the section of I.V. Koltunov's battalion.

Unable to reach the hill from the south, at 2030 hours the enemy undertook a new powerful counterattack from two directions at once: from the side Mikheyev and from the forest to the east of Barsukov.(23) The strongest

thrust came against the 469th Rifle Regiment where Lt Col P.D. Alekseyev had assumed command. The right-flank battalion of the regiment was retreating slowly.

The corps commander immediately sent a rifle battalion from his reserve and a company of combat engineers with antitank mines to reinforce the men fighting on Zaozernaya.

From the observation post of the commander of the rifle corps one had a good view of the fierce fighting which lasted around 90 minutes on the approaches to the hill. The last attempt by the enemy to win the hill ended with a failure for it. Zaozernaya remained in our hands.

Over a period of 2 days, the enemy had lost 1,600 soldiers and officers in killed alone as well as 8 guns, 9 mortars, 12 machine guns, 5 tanks and much other military equipment. Moreover, we had captured 16 prisoners. Our losses during this time were 260 men killed and 594 men wounded.(24)

The fighting of 22-23 June in 1944 made it possible to draw certain conclusions. Thus, it showed that the capture of elev. Zaozernaya was caused by the precise and coordinated actions of all the formations, units and subunits of the LXXIX Rifle Corps on a broad front, as a result of which the enemy was confused over our actual intentions.

The initial success in capturing elevs. Zaozernaya and 166.9 virtually without losses was the result of the rapid attack, precise cooperation and dependable control by all levels of commanders. The employment of direct laying guns produced a good effect.

Combat experience showed that the deviating from an elaborated plan could involve serious consequences. In particular, the delay in taking up the captured lines by the subunits of the 171st Rifle Division not only prevented the prompt creation of close battle formations and the setting out of obstacles on elev. 166.9, but also was the main reason for its abandonment. Thus, the fighting to capture the elevations again confirmed the importance of careful preparations for reinforcing captured positions and repelling enemy counterattacks.

The success of an assault depends largely upon the presence in the battle formations of the rifle subunits of artillery commanders with communications for effectively calling in fire against arising important targets.

In recalling this fighting, the former commander of the Second Baltic Front, MSU A.I. Yermenko, has written: "As a whole, these described actions were of enormous significance in preparing the troops for offensive fighting. We not only improved our positions, but also made a good study of the enemy's forces and capabilities, its

tactics and methods of fighting. The capability of the command personnel, the courage and self-sacrifice of the men and their boldness were apparent in the fight...."(25)

Footnotes

1. During the described events, the author was the aide of the commander of the LXXIX Rifle Corps.
2. TsAMO SSSR [Central Archives of the USSR Ministry of Defense], folio 79sk, inv. 20539, file 1, sheet 25.
3. Ibid., inv. 216337, file 2, sheet 13.
4. Ibid., inv. 53357, file 1, sheets 174-175.
5. Ibid., folio 171sd, inv. 1, file 35, sheet 20.
6. Ibid., folio 207sd, inv. 1, file 24, sheet 37.
7. Ibid., folio 79sk, inv. 53359, file 4, sheet 101.
8. Ibid., inv. 53357, file 1, sheet 173.
9. Ibid., folio 171sd, inv. 2, file 36, sheet 291.
10. Ibid., folio 79sk, inv. 53357, file 1, sheet 184.
11. Ibid., inv. 20539, file 1, sheet 31.
12. Ibid., inv. 53357, file 1, sheet 183.
13. Ibid., inv. 216337, file 2, sheet 14.
14. Ibid., inv. 53357, file 1, sheet 185.
15. Ibid., inv. 20539, file 1, sheet 30.
16. Ibid., folio 674sp, inv. 236032, inv. 1, sheets 44, 48.
17. Ibid., folio 171sd, inv. 1, file 35, sheet 87.
18. Ibid., inv. 2, file 36, sheet 289.
19. Ibid., inv. 1, file 30, sheet 119.
20. Ibid., folio 79sk, inv. 20539, file 1, sheet 33.
21. Ibid., inv. 216337, file 2, sheet 15.
22. Ibid., inv. 20539, file 1, sheet 33.
23. Ibid., inv. 216337, file 2, sheet 15.

24. Ibid., inv. 53357, file 1, sheet 205.

25. A.I. Yermenko, "Gody vozmездia, 1943-1945" [Years of Retribution, 1943-1945], Moscow, Finansy i Statistika, 2d Edition, 1985, p 184.

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal", 1988.

10272

Articles Not Translated from VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHURNAL No 3, March 1988

000100341 Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press
24 Feb 88 p 2

Certain Features of Work in the Long-Range Aviation
Formations and Units (P.N. Chuyko)(pp 63-67)

Wehrmacht Documents (Unattributed)(pp 84-85)

Suppression of Kronstadt Anti-Soviet Revolt (V.O.
Daynes)(pp 86-90)

Scientific Conference at the Novocherkassk Museum
(L.A. Gurov)(p 91)

One Hundred Forty Year of Morskoy sbornik(V.P. Alek-
seyev)(pp 92-96)

10272

Publication Data

00010034m Moscow VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY
ZHURNAL in Russian No 3, Mar 88 (signed to press
24 Feb 88

English title: MILITARY HISTORY JOURNAL

Russian title: VOYENNO-ISTORICHESKIY ZHUR-
NAL

Editor: A.G. Khorkov

Publishing house: Krasnaya Zvezda

Place of publication: Moscow

Date of publication: March 1988

Signed to press: 24 February 1988

Copies:

COPYRIGHT: "Voyenno-istoricheskii zhurnal", 1988

10272

END OF

FICHE

DATE FILMED

14 July 88